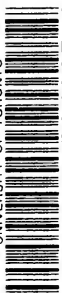


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HOW OLD MAJE CARRIED DOUBLE.

JACK HAZARD

AND HIS FORTUNES.

BY

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JACK HAZARD AND HIS FORTUNES.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ERIE CANAL.



FREIGHTED scow was moving slowly against the sluggish current of the Erie Canal.

It was drawn by a pair of gaunt horses, too feeble even to keep the rotten tow-line from sagging into the water. At their heels, along the muddy tow-path, followed a ragged little driver with a whip in one hand and a piece of bread-and-molasses in the other. At one moment he took a bite of the bread, and at the next he gave the team a cut with the whip. Every time he whipped, up went

the rope dripping and swinging, and every time he bit, down it dropped again with a splash, or with a

series of splashes, as the poor brutes staggered unsteadily forward.

Once he neglected to ply the lash whilst he regaled himself with two or three bites. Then a gruff voice bawled out from the stern of the boat, "Lick along there!" It was the voice of a rough, swarthy, bare-headed man who sat smoking a short pipe on the after-part of the cabin, — the voice, in short, of Captain Jack Berrick, master of the scow. Crack went the whip again, and the little driver shouted back, from a mouth well filled with bread-and-molasses, "Ye can't lick life into a couple of old crowbaits. What they want is less whip and more oats."

Yet, for want of oats, he gave them the lash again in liberal measure. At the same time he swore at them, and at the old scow and the canal, in a fearfully voluble and energetic manner. Indeed, the little wretch seemed scarcely able to speak without swearing, — as if oaths were as necessary a part of the speech that came out of his mouth as molasses was of the bread that went into it. If you could have seen and heard him, you would have pronounced him the most profane little driver on the canal; but that would have been saying a great deal, for this was twenty-five years ago, when you might have travelled from Albany to Buffalo without finding a driver who did not swear. I remember once hearing of one who did not, but I never saw him. He was considered a phenomenon. The canal has since been enlarged; and, with other improvements, I believe



the morals of the boatmen have been reformed. But five-and-twenty years ago ! Profane enough our little driver certainly was, as well as vicious in other ways ; and with the companions he had, and with such a man as old Jack Berrick for a father, — familiar from his childhood with the life of the tow-path and the canal stables, — how was it possible for him to be different ? As he is to be the hero of this story, I make haste to put in this plea for him, to prevent fastidious readers from dropping his acquaintance at the outset. Perhaps we shall find some good in him by and by.

"That's one o' the boys, Pete!" said old Jack to the steersman, with a nod of approval.

"A boy after his dad's own heart," said Pete, with a sarcastic grin.

"There ain't his beat on the ditch," said Berrick, boastfully.

"Owin' to his bringin' up," said Pete, squinting over the bow with a professional air, and pushing the tiller about with his back braced hard against it. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he won't depart from it," he added, as he carried the scow safely round a bend in the canal. "That's Scriptur', Cap'n Jack."

"You don't say, Pete!" replied Cap'n Jack, taking the pipe from his mouth and regarding the steersman with mild astonishment. "What do you know about that?"

"By George, I was a Sunday-school chap once!" said Pete, giving the tiller a sharp turn in the other direction to keep the scow in the channel as the canal straightened.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Cap'n Jack. "A Sunday-school chap, Pete!"

"Which proves that Scriptur' ain't true," said Pete. "I was trained up in the way I should go, and I've departed from it, hanged if I hain't! Seriously, though, Cap'n, it's a shame to bring up a boy the way you're bringin' him up."

"That idee comes from your 'arly Sunday-school prejudices," replied Berrick, smoking tranquilly. "What else can I do with the boy?"

"Put him to some trade ; do anything with him sooner 'n keep him on the canal. He 's got good stuff in him, that boy has, and he might make a decent sort of man. This lawless kind of life will do for old reprobates like me and you, Cap'n Jack ; but, as I said —"

"Wait a minute !" said Berrick. "This is too good !" He stooped and put his bristling head down the companion-way. "Molly !" he called, "come up quick ! And pass up the jug, Molly !"

Presently a pair of long, thin hands appeared from below, bearing up a shining black jug, and followed by the face and bust of a slovenly woman. At the same time up rose with a yawn a large, rough-looking black dog that had been lying asleep by the rudder-post, and jumped upon the cabin deck.

"What 's the fun ?" asked the woman, standing on the stairs.

Berrick first tipped up the jug under his nose, then passed it to the steersman. "Here, wet your whistle, Pete, then blow away. Pete is preachin' a sermon, Molly !"

Pete, standing beside the tiller, bore the jug to his mouth. As it was still necessary for him to keep an eye out for the difficulties of navigation, he had while he drank the comical look of a man taking aim across a very short and very portentous blunderbuss levelled at Jack on the tow-path.

"Here, give me a taste o' that !" cried Jack ; and in order to get a chance to fall back and have a drink, he gave his horses two or three parting cuts. The

tow-rope happened to be sagging pretty deep in the water at the time, and the sudden force with which they straightened it proved too much for its rotting fibres. It snapped in the middle, and the two fragments, flying asunder with a little flash of spray, dropped helpless and relaxed into the canal.

This trifling accident caused a good deal of excitement at the stern of the boat,—only the big dog keeping his calm demeanor. He looked on with serene composure whilst Pete sprang for a pike-pole, and Molly took the helm, and Dick (another driver, who had been sleeping below) stumbled up the companion-way rubbing his eyes, and Cap'n Jack at the bow hauled up out of the water the half of the line attached to the boat, and Jack from the tow-path hauled up the other half.

Cap'n Jack, gathering his half of the rope into a coil, threw it for little Jack to catch. Little Jack failed to execute his part of the manœuvre,—for the good reason that the rope did not come within ten feet of him,—and it fell once more into the canal. This made Cap'n Jack very wrathful. He drew out the wet rope again, and sprang ashore with the end of it the moment the bow touched the tow-path, and made a heavy swooping cut with it at little Jack's head. Little Jack dodged and it passed over him. Then Cap'n Jack made another swooping cut at his legs. Little Jack leaped in the air, and it passed under his feet. Then Cap'n Jack dropped the rope, and rushed upon him, seizing him by the ragged

collar with one hand and by the raggedest part of his trousers with the other, and lifted him, kicking and screaming, in the air.

"Help! Pete, help!" shrieked the victim,—"help!" as he swung to and fro over the tow-path,—face downwards, and head towards the canal,—until the powerful Berrick had got him well in hand. But Pete knew better than to interfere and draw Cap'n Jack's rage upon himself. "Help!" once more shrieked the little human pendulum, moving through an ever-increasing arc,— "Dick! Molly! Lion!"

The last word was scarcely uttered when the hands that set him in motion relaxed their grip, and he shot headforemost, with a great splash and a stifled scream, into the canal. For a moment he disappeared; then he came up paddling and strangling and swearing under the bow of the boat.

Berrick stood and laughed while he scrambled to the shore and dragged himself out dripping upon the tow-path, then caught him up again. He had given him but one good swing, and was just giving him another, preparatory to launching him, when his hand was suddenly arrested. It was not Pete nor Dick nor Molly who came to the lad's rescue. Neither was it the gentleman who just then appeared walking on the tow-path,—though he quickened his pace at sight of the struggle. Swifter feet than his bounded past him, and a more formidable shape flung itself upon old Berrick.

It was Lion the dog.

CHAPTER II

JACK AND HIS ONE FRIEND.

LION the dog had travelled with the scow but a few weeks; and this is the way he happened to fall into such bad company.

As the boat was one day taking in water at one of those small canal ports called "basins," little Jack noticed a lonesome, half-starved, strange-looking creature prowling about a stable.

"What's the matter with that dog?" he asked.

"Singed," said the stable-keeper. "The tavern was burnt here the other night; his master was drunk at the time, and he was burnt in it. That dog got 'most all his hair singed off trying to get him out. He burnt his feet too; but they're getting well. Nobody can coax him; and nobody wants a singed dog like that; and we're going to have him shot. Give him a piece of bread, and he'll snatch it, but he'll snap at you."

"I'll see," said Jack. He went to the scow, and came back with a biscuit he had begged of Molly. Walking boldly up to the dog, he said, "Poor fellow!" and breaking the biscuit gave him a piece of it. The miserable creature ate it thankfully, and did not snap or snarl. So Jack gave him the rest of the biscuit, and stroked his singed ears, and looked at his burnt

paws, and "poor fellowed" him sympathetically. Then it was time for the scow to move.

As it was Dick's "drive," Jack, bidding the dog an affectionate good-by, started to go aboard, when the poor thing came limping after him.

"Take him on, Pete!" said Jack. "'T won't hurt anything; and we can put him off any time we like. He looks mean, for he's been singed, but I bet he's a real first-rate dog."

Pete, being a good-natured fellow, made no opposition, and the strange passenger was taken on. But when Berrick appeared, bringing his jug from the nearest grocery, he set out to kick the dog ashore. The dog growled. Berrick grasped a pike-pole; swinging the end of it around, he accidentally knocked off little Jack's hat. Just then came a puff of wind and blew the hat into the water. The dog was in after it in an instant; and he swam with it in his mouth to the tow-path. He would deliver it to no one but its owner. Little Jack was delighted, of course, and big Jack was conciliated. From that day Lion — for so the boy named him — travelled with the scow. His burns had now healed, his hair was beginning to lose its singed look, and his eyewinkers were growing again.

He was a fine watch-dog, and it was always safe to leave the cabin in his charge. One day the black jug got knocked overboard; and as it happened to be full it sank. Lion plunged in after it, went to the bottom, and reappeared with the handle in his jaws.

This very important service made him a favorite even with Captain Berrick.

Still he owned but one absolute master, and that was little Jack. And now when he saw little Jack in the hands of big Jack, and heard his cry of "Lion!" he leaped from the stern, swam ashore, and reached the scene of the scuffle just as the boy was about being plunged in again.

Berrick was thrown to the ground, and in an instant Lion's jaws were at his throat. But Lion knew his business. The terrible teeth did not close, they only threatened to close. Berrick knew better than to struggle against such a foe. He lay quietly on his back in a mud-puddle, and called on Pete to "Pull the dog off!"

"Pete won't do any such thing!" cried the exultant little driver, springing to his feet, whip in hand. "Lion will do as I say!" and he called the dog. "But don't you lay hands on me again!"

So saying, the little driver, very wet and very much excited, retreated, followed by Lion; while Berrick got up and shook off the mud.

Meanwhile Pete, turning his face towards the canal so that Cap'n Jack should not see him laugh, tied the broken rope, adding another knot to the five or six with which it was already ornamented. Then little Jack started up his team again. Lion kept by his side. Berrick disappeared in the cabin, while Molly took the helm, and Pete and Dick poled off the bow.

Little Jack was soon aware of somebody besides

Lion keeping him company. It was the gentleman who appeared walking on the tow-path when the scuffle began, and who had stopped to see it over. He was a stoutish man, plainly dressed, and carrying a hickory cane.

"Your horses seem hardly fit for this work," he said, in a friendly tone, walking on with the little driver.

"Dumbed if they be!" said Jack, whipping them. "Every old worn-out beast in the country is sold to go on the canal. That's the reason you always see such a mean-looking lot. But it don't take us long to use 'em up; that's one comfort!" Crack!

"You've a noble old dog here!" the man said.

"He'd 'ave jest chawed the old man's throat, if I had said the word!" replied Jack. And he turned to pat Lion's head.

"He's a Newfoundland, — or part Newfoundland, at least," the man remarked. "Has he been clipped?"

"No, burnt; but I've trimmed him a little." And Jack told the dog's history. By this time he and the stranger were getting pretty well acquainted.

Jack looked up and grinned saucily in the man's face.

"You're a minister, ain't ye?"

"What makes you think so?"

"O, you've kind o' got the ear-marks," laughed Jack. "But if you have been on the canal much, I guess you've heard a feller swear afore to-day."

"I have, too often!" said the gentleman. "Have you a mother?"

"Not much!" said Jack, bitterly. "*He* married my mother when I was a little shaver, and that's the way he happened to be my father. But she's been dead I don't know how many years, and that Molly is his wife now. My mother's name was Hazard. They called me Jack after him, but I don't own him for a father. He's a regular old toper!"

"You drink a little, too, don't you?"

"Course I do, when I can!"

"And so you are growing up to be a toper like him?"

"I s'pose so!" said Jack, recklessly, and plied the whip. "Go 'lang there, you old —" Crack, crack!

"And a bad man like him!" said the stranger. "It's a great pity, a great pity!" and he laid his hand gently on Jack's wet shoulder.

"Where's the help for it?" said Jack, affected by this kindness in spite of himself. "I'd be different if I could; but how can I?"

"Leave him; that is the only way."

"But he claims me; he's got papers that will hold me; and he'll ketch me as sure as I stay on the canal."

"Leave the canal."

"Pshaw! what could I do? I'm used to the old ditch. I ain't good for nothin' else but a driver."

"Come to me, and I'll get you a good place to do something else, — to learn a trade, or to work on a farm. I'll protect you; no matter for his papers."

"Are you a lawyer?"

"As much a lawyer as a minister. You see," said the gentleman, good-humoredly, "you were slightly mistaken in the ear-marks."

The boy reflected a moment, gave the horses a cut or two, then said, "Pshaw! don't believe I should like a trade; and there's no fun on a farm, nor much else but hard work. Thank ye, sir; but there's worse men, after all, than Cap'n Jack. I guess I'll stick to driving."

"The packet is coming," said the man, casting a glance behind. "I am a passenger; I must leave you. Good by, my boy. Perhaps I shall hear from you again some time. Shall I hear good of you, if I do?—for you don't know yourself what you may become, if you try. I can see you industrious, upright, happy, commanding the respect of everybody."

"No, you can't! 't ain't in me!" said Jack, beginning to choke.

"You may be all that and a great deal more, my boy! But you must first get away from your old associates. Then make up your mind to three things. First, don't be afraid of hard work. Second, be honest and truthful, and decent in your speech and behavior. Third, help others. Begin a new life anywhere on these principles, and you will be sure to succeed. Remember! Good by!"

Once more the stranger patted Jack's wet shoulder. Jack wanted to say something by way of answer, but he felt that if he spoke he must cry. He was

not used to such kindness. Meanwhile he had stopped his team, and dropped the tow-rope to let the three strong packet horses trot over it; and now he dropped it again under the packet's bow. As the swift, slender, handsome boat passed between the scow and the tow-path, the gentleman stepped aboard, and Jack saw him no more.

"What a fool that I did n't say I'd go with him!" thought the wretched little driver, as he watched the proud packet disappear round a bend. He set his teeth hard, and winked hard at his tears, and repeated to himself, "What a fool!" For just then the possible future presented to him appeared, in contrast with the life he was living, very much like that fine, free, happy boat compared with Berrick's old scow; and it seemed, like that, to be passing from him forever.

"Lion!" said he, suppressing a sob, "you're all the friend I've got! We'll stick together, won't we? Dumb'd if we won't!" And the lad's tears fell upon the faithful creature's sympathetic, upturned nose.

CHAPTER III.

HOW JACK LEFT THE SCOW.

"LICK along, Jack!" sang out Pete from the stern; and he pointed significantly at the cabin, from which the discomfited Berrick had not yet emerged.

"I ain't afraid of him!" muttered Jack. But he was afraid, — not so much for himself, perhaps, as for Lion. He knew well that Cap'n Berrick never forgot an injury. "He'll kill my dog!" thought he, looking back at the scow. Then he looked forward again with bitter regret in the direction of the vanished packet. "Why *did n't* I take him at his offer? He praised Lion; and maybe he'd have let me keep him with me. Now if I leave the scow I must leave the dog too, — for how can I take care of him? 'T will be all I can do to take care of myself!"

Then he thought of all the attractions of that moving, adventurous life. He even felt for the old canal an affection which his late plunge into its turbid current could not chill. Just now it curved about a high embankment that commanded a view of Lake Ontario, several miles away. A lovely picture was outspread between, — forests and farms warmly tinted in the mellow sunshine and thin haze of early summer. Even this pure and tranquil beauty seemed a

part of his wild, lawless life. Then he remembered the Valley of the Mohawk, and the great cities, and the locks ; the jokes and stories of grocery and stable ; the encounters with old acquaintances, and the making of new acquaintances, and the fights between boatmen. In all these things, it must be owned, there was novelty and enticement to the heart of the boy, and how could he bear to leave them, to settle down, and be respectable ?

One thing especially discouraged him from entertaining any serious hope of bettering his condition. "If I am going to try and be a decent sort of feller," thought he, "I must leave off swearing. Now I'll see if I can." But fifty times that afternoon he caught himself at the old trick again, — when he whipped the horses (they did n't seem to mind the lash unless it was accompanied by an oath), when he met a driver he knew (no friendly greeting of drivers would seem hearty unless they swore), but chiefly when his tow-rope got entangled with another and his near horse was pulled into the canal. Then he gave up all attempts at reform in that particular. As if habits which have been years in gaining their ascendancy over us could be expected to abdicate in an hour !

The scow moved on, now under a bridge, and now over a culvert that carried some rushing stream beneath the canal, — now through a swamp, and now around a hillside, — keeping always the same artificial level, until at last Pete put a tin horn to his lips and blew a note.

That was always a welcome signal to poor little Jack, after his day's work; but now it gave him a thrill of uneasiness. He was to go to his supper; at the same time he was to meet Cap'n Berrick. "Keep a stiff upper-lip, Lion!" he said, talking to his own heart rather than to the dog.

The scow was laid up by the tow-path, a broad gangway-plank was pushed out, and Jack's horses were driven aboard after a fresh pair—if *such* a pair could be called fresh—had been taken ashore; for the scow, unlike the packets and line-boats, which were furnished with relays at the canal stations, kept its stable aboard. Then Dick took the whip, and Cap'n Jack the helm (little Jack was glad of that), and Pete and the boy and Lion went down to supper.

"What did he say?" whispered Jack, over his pork and beans.

"He 's been mutterin' vengeance against you and the dog; says he 'll kill one or t' other on ye."

"Let him try it!" said Jack, with an air of bravado.

"He means mischief; so ye better look out!" whispered Pete.

"It 'll blow over," said Molly. "But you better not provoke him. You see he's mad now."

"I could see that by his eyes when I passed him, though he didn't speak. All I care for is Lion."

"He won't hurt Lion," said Molly, putting more beans on Jack's plate; for though she could herself

at times be cross enough with him, she generally took his part against Berrick.

After supper the tired boy tumbled into a bunk and fell asleep in his clothes. When he awoke the cabin was dark, and he was alone. His first thought was of Lion. He called him.

"No use o' that," said Molly, in a low voice, from the companion-way. "Lion's took care on." And she laughed.

"How?" cried the boy, springing up.

"The old man's got him chained to the rudder-post."

"I'll see about that!" And Jack hastened to go upon deck.

It was deep twilight. Berrick was still at the helm. Behind him crouched Lion, chained short to the rudder-post. Pete was placing a lantern on the bow. Another boat with lanterns was coming, and there was a soft glimmer on the water before it. The glimmer approached and lighted up Berrick's rough features for a moment, and passed on. Berrick, to make way for the other boat, had laid the scow well over against the "heel-path" (so called to distinguish it from the opposite side of the canal, or *tow-path*), and it now almost brushed the leaning willows that grew upon the silent, solitary shore.

"What have you got that dog chained for?" the boy asked, with his heart in his throat.

"Come here and I'll show ye," said Berrick.

"I guess I'm near enough," replied the boy. "I

don't want a fuss ; but he 's my dog, and I won't see him abused."

"Help yourself," said Berrick, tauntingly. "Why don't you unchain him? Come, I've a little account to settle with you!"

To get the bow off, he was crowding the stern still farther over against the "heel-path"; and Jack thought, "If I could get Lion loose once, I'd jump ashore with him, and *he* never should see us again!" That might have been done whilst Cap'n Jack was pressing with all his might against the tiller, if the boy could only have seen just how the dog was chained. He took a step nearer, in order to observe. By this time Berrick had got the boat headed from the shore; he had been watching his chance; suddenly he left the tiller, and with one sweep of his arm struck the boy down. Molly screamed "Murder!" Pete ran from the bow; Lion struggled to break his chain; but there was no help for poor little Jack just then. Berrick lifted him once and threw him to the deck. Berrick lifted him again, and flung him headlong over the rail. A heavy splash, and all was still in the dark water which went eddying slowly away from the stern of the scow.

The violent rattling of Lion's chain was the last sound the boy heard as he went overboard; and it was the first to greet his ringing ears when he rose gasping to the surface some seconds after. He was so nearly stunned that he had but a very vague idea of what had happened to him. Something touched



his face ; it was a drooping willow-twig ; he laid hold of it instinctively and drew himself to the bank. There he lay for a few minutes perfectly still, collecting his scattered wits, and trying to think what he should do. Was that dark object, moving off yonder in mid-channel, the scow ? Should he call for help ? Hark ! somebody was calling him !

Yes, there was Pete swinging a lantern over the stern and looking anxiously at the water below. "Jack, I say ! Jack !" he called. Then Molly ap-

peared and bent over by the light, and cried, "Jack, you little fool you! why don't you speak?" He could see them distinctly, but they could not see him.

Suddenly Pete snatched the lantern away, and shouted to Dick. Then Berrick's voice was heard speaking angrily. Then a pike-pole clattered and splashed. The scow had stopped.

"They are coming back for me," thought Jack. "But they sha' n't find me."

He crept farther up into the bushes, thinking he would sooner die there than go on board the scow again. He could see nothing now; but for some minutes he heard confused, wild sounds in the darkness,—voices speaking hurriedly, and splashes in the water; and now somebody was coming towards him through the bushes. Was it Pete? Was it Berrick? The boy's breath stopped; his heart almost stopped too, so great now was his dread and horror of that man.

Nearer and nearer came the noise of rustling leaves and snapping twigs, straight to where the boy lay! Suddenly a mass of drenched hair was dashed upon him, and a wet nozzle thrust into his face. He almost cried out with joy, as he started up, defending himself against eager paws and a swift hot tongue. It was Lion the dog once more.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK'S FLIGHT.

THE scow lay moored by the dusky shore, while Dick went down the tow-path, and Pete, with a lantern, traversed the "heel-path," calling Lion and looking for little Jack. In the mean time little Jack sat upright behind the bushes, laughing to himself, and patting the dog's neck to keep him still.

"Here's somethin' afloat!"—he heard Pete call out from the canal-side, a few rods farther down. "Hullo! it's a straw hat!"

"Then he's gone to the bottom," he heard Dick reply, and laughed again, not because he thought it fun to be given up for drowned by his friends, but because he hoped to fire old Berrick's soul with remorse for his untimely fate.

"Don't make fools o' yerselves, boys!" Berrick shouted from the scow. "You can't drown Jack. Beat the bushes and look behind the logs, and you'll find him. Then fetch him here. I'll pay him for playin' us such a trick,—the scow waitin'!"

Jack stopped laughing at this speech, which did n't sound as if it came from a soul likely to be fired very much with remorse on his account. He rose to his feet, and stole away across a stumpy field, followed

by the dog. "Their old scow'll wait a spell, if it waits for us!" he muttered, — "won't it, Lion?"

Close by was a low stone-wall; and beyond that lay a road. Jack tumbled over into it, and began to run. Lion bounded by his side, in great glee; he, too, seemed to feel that they had gained their freedom.

"This is the way we'll get dry and warm, ain't it, Lion?" said Jack, dropping once more into a walk when he was out of breath. "We've both been wet once to-day, and dried once; and now we'll soon be dry again. Lucky we've had our supper!"

The long twilight was obscured by heavy clouds in the west, and the evening grew darker and darker, until at last he became aware of a pale light increasing upon the earth. He had looked often enough behind him when he first started on the road; now he looked again, and behold! the moon was rising, large and red, over the wooded hills. He had by this time travelled three or four miles.

Why he walked so fast and so far he himself could hardly have told. He passed several houses in which there were lights; but, hatless and wet as he was, he did not like to show himself in any of them. He was getting dry now; but he was farther than ever from his hat, without which he seemed to think himself unpresentable. Jack had a great idea of beginning his new life on a basis of respectability.

At last he came to a house which was not only full of light, but of sound also. It was situated on an open corner at the crossing of two roads, — a one-

story house without a window or a blind, or a fence before the door. He knew enough of civilization to guess that this was a school-house. He listened as he drew near, and heard male and female voices singing a hymn; then he guessed it must be a meeting-house. The outer door was open, and he thought it would be interesting to peep in.

He peeped in accordingly. He saw before him a moonlit entry, beyond which was a half-open door leading into a larger room. It was in this that the lights and singers were; but he could not see much of them, owing to the broad back of a stout man within, who stood close by the doorway. The stout man held a singing-book in one hand, and was beating time with the other, and neither he nor anybody else noticed the ragged, bareheaded boy behind him.

Now, what chiefly interested Jack was — not the stout man beating time, nor the wide-open mouth of the only other singer visible (though Jack thought he could have “chucked a peanut into it,” if he had had one), nor the music itself, but — a row of hats hung upon nails in the entry. Two or three were common-looking straw hats, — a circumstance which tended greatly to enhance his interest in them. There was one which he thought would suit him. He slipped in and out again undiscovered, and the hat was on his head. It did not at the moment occur to him that he was stealing. The fancied necessity of the act — that fruitful source of crimes great and small — excused it to his conscience, — if the little canal-driver could be supposed to have a conscience.

"The owner can get another easy enough," he thought; "while I *must have* one." It proved a rather loose fit, but he tightened the band; and he even laughed as he imagined the said owner's perplexity when he should come to look for his property. "He 'll fancy the wind has blowed it away," thought Jack.

Once more in the road, he walked on faster than ever. From the top of a hill he looked back and saw the light still in the school-house, and heard faintly the sound of the music, and said to himself, "Hain't missed his hat yit!" Just then the moon went under a cloud, and with the gloom that fell upon the earth a strangely uncomfortable feeling came over the boy's heart.

"I must n't stop till I git fur enough away from here," thought he; "for his hat must n't be found on me!"

As he went on, he thought over the advice his unknown friend, the packet passenger, had given him. When he got as far as "BE HONEST," he could not but feel that he had diverged slightly from the straight line marked out for him. He took off the hat and held it in his hand. "I wish the dumb thing was back there on the nail!" he said. "Never mind! it's done, and it can't be helped. Come on, old Lion!"

But he now remarked with no little uneasiness that the few lights in the farm-houses he passed were beginning to disappear. His way became al-

most fearfully gloomy and lonesome ; he was getting weary and the night was chill, — too chill for sleeping out of doors.

“ I must put up somewhere ; it ’s time I was looking for a place,” thought he. “ I can offer to pay for my lodging,” (he had fourteen cents in his pocket,) “ or I can ask for work.”

With this thought in his mind, he approached the only dwelling in which a light was now visible. It was some time after he had knocked, and knocked again, that he heard a bolt withdrawn, then saw the door slowly open, and an old man appear holding the latch in one hand and a flaring candle in the other. He had on nothing but a shirt, and his hair and features had the ruffled and cross look of one who had just gone to bed and just got up again very unwillingly. “ What do ye want ? ” he asked, scowling at Jack.

“ Work, if you please,” said Jack.

“ Who be ye ? Where did ye come from ? ” And the man held his candle almost at the boy’s nose.

Jack thought, “ If I tell him I come off from the canal, he won’t have me ” ; so he said, “ I ’ve come out from the city to find a job.”

“ What can ye do ? ”

“ I can drive a team, sir.”

“ Can that dog drive a team too ? ”

Jack felt the force of the question, and answered with a bold front, “ I did n’t know he follered me till after I started, then I could n’t send him back.”

“ Seems to me it ’s a strange time to start out look-

in' for a job!" said the man, eying him suspiciously, while the candle dripped and his linen waved in the night wind.

"I left the city in the morning," replied Jack. That was true enough, though not in the sense in which he meant to be understood. So far, he fancied he had made a pretty straight story out of a crooked one; but now, he had to spoil it by adding, — "I did n't go back, for I thought if I could n't git a job to-night, maybe I could find one to-morrow."

The man scowled at him more suspiciously than ever, and exclaimed in a tone of amazement, "SUNDAY!"

"Is to-morrow — I did n't think of its being — Sunday!" stammered Jack; which was about the only simply and strictly true thing he had said. There was no Sunday on the canal, and he had forgotten that there was such an institution anywhere else. "Of course!" he hastily added, thinking such ignorance would prove more damaging to his character for respectability than the simple act of starting out to find work at the close of the week. "I wanted to git a job, and be on the spot all ready to begin it Monday."

"I believe you 're lyin', every word you say," answered the old man. "You just want a place to stop over night, and perhaps steal somethin', then that would be the last of you. If you really want to find work among honest folks, you must learn to tell a straight story, and git red of that dog. Now clear out, and don't you prowl about this house!"

So saying, he shut and bolted the door.

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE.

MATTERS were beginning to look serious to poor Jack. Saturday night, only fourteen cents in his pocket, a dog on his hands, and no chance now for work until Monday; could he hope that anybody would take him in and keep him until then,—a ragged little wretch like him?

As he walked along the lonely road again, he could not help wondering how far he was from the canal.

“If I could crawl into a stable somewhere till morning!” he thought. He was used to that. And now the idea occurred to him, “Why not crawl into a stable somewhere along here?”

Whilst looking for some such humble shelter he saw another light. But he avoided the house in which it was,—a large farm-house standing well back from the road,—and took a circuitous route across two or three fenced fields to get at the barn from the rear. He entered a yard, and passed some cattle lying on the ground, before and under an open shed,—almost stumbling over a cow, that rose suddenly to her feet before him and walked off in the darkness. He stopped and listened. He could hear the heavy breathing of the cattle, but no other sound.

He stepped softly along, and laid his hand on the barn, feeling for a door. He found one, and the pin that fastened it. With a slight twist he withdrew the pin. Just then Lion gave a growl.

"Come here! stop your noise!" whispered the boy, trembling with vague apprehension, — for, strange as it may seem, he felt much more as if he were stealing now than when he took the hat.

Softly he opened the door. At that moment Lion growled again in a way he did not like. He stood breathless for a moment, peering into the darkness on all sides, when a sudden light glimmered in the shed, and two figures rushed out upon him, one carrying a tin lantern, and the other armed with a gun.

Jack dropped the door-pin and retreated.

"Who are you?" a sharp voice demanded.

"Le' me 'lone!" said Jack; while Lion sprang between him and his assailants.

"Keep that dog back, or I'll blow his brains out!" said he with the gun.

Thereupon Jack made a stand, facing about and calling Lion to his side. The two figures advanced; the sprinkled radiance from the perforated tin enclosed them in its quivering circle, and he could see that he was confronted by two sturdy farm-boys not much older than himself. He stood with one hand on the dog's neck, pale but defiant, when the door of the lantern was opened, and a broad stream of light fell upon dog and boy.

"What do you want here?" said the lad with the



gun, — a tall young fellow, with a resolute face, but as pale as Jack's own.

"Work, — I'm hunting for work," said Jack.

"This is a pretty place to hunt for it!" said the lad with the lantern, excitedly. "You expected to find it in that stable, did ye? Look, Ab! he'd got the door open!"

"Why did n't ye go to the house, if you wanted honest work?" said Ab.

"I was afraid the folks was abed," replied Jack.

"Did n't ye see a light there?"

"Yes, but 't was late, and I was afraid of disturbing folks."

"That was very considerate!" said Ab. "So you thought you 'd jest help yourself to what you could find, without troubling anybody!—What 's that, Jase?"

"The pin to the door, that he 'd flung down here," said Jase, picking it up.

"You may think I was stealing, if you like," said Jack, desperately. "But I 'll jest tell you the truth. All I expected to find in this here barn was jest a place to sleep on the straw somewhere."

"Where do you come from, any way?"

"Out of the canal, about the last thing. I 'd been flung into it twice too often, and I got sick o' that sort o' business. So I made up my mind to quit. I hain't got dry yet. If you was in my place, I guess you 'd be glad enough to crawl into a stable and sleep, without thinking about stealing."

This speech evidently made an impression on Ab and Jase. They stood regarding his ragged clothes and anxious face, in the light of the lantern, while poor little Jack put up his grimy knuckles and dashed away a tear.

"Where are your friends?" said Ab, in a milder tone of voice.

"The only friend I've got in the world is this one here!" replied Jack, laying his hand on Lion's head. "And he's the best—" He was going to choke. To avoid that weakness, he began to swear, letting off such a volley of oaths as Ab and Jase had never heard anywhere off the canal. He swore about the virtues of his dog, and the badness of the rest of the world, and his own ill luck, until his emotion was expended, and he was himself again.

Ab in the mean time had whispered to Jase, "Shall we let him stop?" and Jase had replied, "I d'n' know—kind of a hard case—s'pose he hain't nowhere else to go"—when this storm of profanity astonished them.

"I guess you did come from the canal!" said Ab; "and it's my opinion you'd better go back there."

"Well! I don't know but I had," said Jack, giving his eyes another savage brush with his fist. "I meant to quit driving and find something better to do. But it's no use! that's all I'm fit fer." And without another word he walked away, with his only friend in the world jogging close by his side. They went down a long lane leading out of the yard and disappeared in the darkness.

"Curi's!" said Ab, leaning on his gun. "What do ye think?"

"Funny!" said Jase, placing the lantern on the ground. "Shall we call him back and let him stay?"

"If he'd waited, we'd have asked pa," said Ab.

"Did n't he swear, though! And I bet he 'd have stole something."

"Seems too bad, don't it?" said Jase, — "to turn him away, if all he wanted was just to sleep on the straw! I pity him, anyhow."

"I wish I had his dog! Was n't he a splendid feller?" said Ab. "I come plaguy nigh shooting him. Shall we watch any longer?"

"Maybe we 'd better, a little while," said Jase. "Besides, *he* may come back again."

So the boys returned to the shed, where Jase set his lantern in a large, deep trough used for feeding the cattle, and placed an empty nail-keg over it. Then both crept into the trough, and lay down; and in a minute shed and yard were as dark and silent as when little Jack came in and passed the sleeping cattle.

In the mean while Jack walked on in a desolate state of mind, not knowing whither the lane would lead him, and caring as little. It led him to a hilly pasture, crossing which he had ample time to reflect upon his situation. He was sorry he did not ask the boys how far it was to the canal, and the way to get there.

"That 's my place; there I 'm at home; I was a fool to leave it!" thought he. "And, after all, dad ain't the wust man in the world. 'T was only once in a while that he treated me so. I 'd give something to tumble into my bunk in the old scow agin, jest now!"

Then as he walked on he chided himself for his want of resolution. "I was going to begin life in a new way! and what have I done? Follered that man's advice? He said, *Be honest*; and I stole a hat the fust thing. He said, *Be truthful*; and what a string of lies I told that man in the house back there! He said, *Be decent in your speech and behavior*; and did n't I swear a blue streak in the face o' them boys? Guess it took their breath away! I don't know what possessed me! It seems as though the Old Harry was in me, and would n't let me do better, if I tried." And poor Jack fairly wept in despair at himself as he went stumbling on over the uneven ground.

Falling over a stone, he got up and sat down upon it. It was now quite dark; a drop fell upon his hand, — it was beginning to rain. He drew Lion to his side and hugged him close.

"Shall we lie down here, old fellow?" he said. "Let the rain come! who cares?"

But he could n't help thinking of the comfortable homes he had passed, and wondering why it was that, when other people had roofs to shelter them, and warm beds to sleep in, and kind hearts to love them, he alone was an outcast in the dismal night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAMP-FIRE IN THE WOODS.

SUDDENLY he saw a little flame shoot up in the darkness, he knew not how far off. It rose, fell, rose again, then flickered and went out. But now where it had been he thought he could distinguish a dull glow, breaking out here and there into sparks of brighter light. It seemed to be in a hollow below the hill on which he was; he thought it must be a fire in the woods, and set out to walk towards it.

At the foot of the hill he came to marshy ground, and a choir of shrill-voiced frogs. He soon found himself stepping in water; then he ran against stumps, and went plunging over roots and through crashing brush-heaps.

He would have turned back, but, getting sight of the fire again, he was sure that he saw a human figure pass before it. Lion took the lead, and piloted him safely, amid stumps and puddles and brushwood, to dry ground on the other side of the swamp.

There a strange scene met his eyes. He seemed to have come upon a little volcano smoking in the woods. It was a circular mound four or five feet high, and perhaps twelve feet in diameter, wrapped in smoke, which poured from an opening in the top, and tran-

spired in thin streaks from the porous sides. The entire mound looked to be one mass of smothered fire kept down by a covering of dry earth. A little removed from it, a couple of burning brands put their red noses together under a kettle suspended by a chain from a pole, — a primitive out-of-door fireplace ; and just beyond that, with a doorway looking out upon it, was a shanty of rough boards.

As Jack left the marsh and the chorus of frogs behind him, and drew near the fire, suddenly a man, black as a negro, with bare head and bare arms, rose from the ground before the shanty, where he had been lying, and, with a shovel in his hand, walked about the smoking mound. By means of fresh earth thrown up from a pile at his feet, he closed a hole in which fire was beginning to appear ; then he made another opening in the side of the mound below ; then he stood leaning on the shovel watching the mound, while the rain fell slowly upon him and the great smouldering heap, and pattered on the last year's leaves that strewed the ground.

"Hullo !" said Jack, emerging from the outer darkness and coming within the dim glow shed about the place.

"Hullo !" said the man.

His manner was not unkind, though his speech was gruff ; and Jack was encouraged to add, "Keep tavern here ?"

"Sort o' kind o'."

"Maybe you would n't object to my drying my legs

“afore that fire?” and Jack cast a longing glance at the brands. “It’s been my luck to git wet to-day.”

“Object, no; make yerself to home,” said the man. “There’s a log to set on. Pull off yer shoes an’ stockin’s, stick yer feet out. Be comf’table.”

Jack seated himself on the log, pulled off his shoes (he had no stockings), stretched out his feet towards the glowing brands, and was as comfortable as could have been expected under the circumstances. Lion sat on the dry, warm earth by his side, and enjoyed the fire with him.

“How did ye git through that swale?” said the man. “I heard a crashin’; thought ’t was a strayed calf, and harked to hear ye bl’at.”

“I ain’t one of the bl’attin’ sort,” said Jack, — “or I should have bl’atted! Though it would n’t have done much good; the frogs made such a racket, I could n’t even have heard myself.”

“I can give ye a little more fire”; and the man cast chips and bark upon the brands, making a quick and cheerful blaze. Jack regarded him with a sort of grateful wonder, his heart warming less in the glow of the fire than at sight of that tall, stalwart, gnome-like creature, so black and rough and ungainly, yet so kind.

“This’ll keep ye dry”; and the man placed a broad board over Jack’s head, resting one end on the pole, and the other on the ground. “Now toast your shins while I look after the pit. Wish I knowed

whuther 't was goin' to rain much," turning up his sooty face to the sky. "None to hurt, I guess."

He walked about the mound, throwing fresh earth upon it here and there with his shovel, then returned and laid more sticks upon the fire.

"What is that smoking heap, any way?" asked Jack, whose curiosity was strongly excited.

"Charcoal,—or it will be, about the middle of next week. This is what we call a pit;—did n't ye ever see a pit before?"

"Never," said Jack.

"I wonder!" said the collier. "I have made charcoal, or helped make it, ever sence I was knee-high to a tud."

"Can boys work at it?" asked Jack, with some eagerness.

"Boys work at it?—yes; I've had boys work under me; though it takes a man that knows how, to burn a pit: I've seen men that have worked at the business half their lives that could n't do that jest right. They 'd burn it too much or not enough,—or they 'd burn it uneven, so 't the coal would come out all crumbly in one place, and like as not half wood in another."

"Do you work at it all the time?"

"When I work at anything. But 't ain't my natur' to work all the time, 'thout no let up. I do my job, then lay off, and spend my money, then hunt up another job, and do that, and so on. In this way I take life easy. Me and my pardner, we got out this

wood last winter, and now we 're pittin' it. After we 've sold the charcoal and spent the money, we shall go to another place where wood 's plenty and cheap, and do the same thing over again. That 's the way we live."

"I should think it was a pretty good way," said Jack. "Will ye hire me?"

The collier, who was lifting the kettle from the fire, turned and looked at the ragged boy sitting there under the slanting board, before the blaze, and looking up inquiringly at him.

"My pardner would have suthin' to say about that," he replied, setting the kettle down. "There 's plenty to do, — choppin', clearin', cookin' our grub, makin' the pit and watchin' it, and gittin' out the coal. But it ain't a kind of life I 'd recommend to a chap like you. It 's a lonesome life. It 's a sort of vagabond life. It 'll do for me; but if I had a son, I 'd say to him, 'Learn a good trade, or go on to a farm.' And that 's my advice to you."

This was very much as Jack had many a time heard Pete talk in his sober moods; and now the friendly counsel of the packet passenger recurred to him with great force. Yet charcoal-burning seemed to him a step higher than canal-driving, and he accordingly proposed to work for the colliers until he could find some other employment.

"I 'll see what my pardner says," replied his new friend, taking down a tin cup hooked by the handle upon the end of the pole on which the kettle had



been hung. "Meanwhile ye better take sutbin' to warm ye." He dipped the cup into the kettle. "Fire 'll do for the outside, but this is good for the inside."

And he placed the cup, filled with black fluid, on the log, turning the handle invitingly towards Jack's hand.

"What is it?" said Jack, lifting the cup to his nostrils. "O, coffee! much obliged!"

"'Lasses biled in," observed the collier. "But milk is skase with us, — 'thout we happen to see a milch cow feedin' in the pastur'; then we help ourselves. Have a bit o' pork, or a biscuit, or a cold potater?"

Jack accepted the biscuit and shared it with Lion, and sipped the strong, black, molasses-sweetened fluid, thankfully enough, and told something of his story.

The collier found another dipper on a natural hook made by cutting off the end of a small branch growing out from one of the crotched saplings that supported the pole; and he drank sociably with his guest, sitting under another board leaned against the pole.

"Well, Bub," said he, after the latter had finished his coffee and his story, "you won't think o' goin' any further to-night, anyhow. So you jest crawl into the cabin there, out o' the wet; and we 'll talk over your case in the mornin'! You sha' n't be turned adrift 'fore Monday, anyhow."

Jack's voice choked and his eyes were blinded with tears, as he started for the cabin.

"Smoke!" he murmured, coughing. But it was something besides smoke that troubled him. As the collier showed the door of the shanty, and bade him "crawl in," he felt so grateful that he could have flung his arms about him and given him a good hugging, black as he was.

"Don't stumble over *him*; he 'll be cross," said the collier.

"Him" was another begrimmed fellow, stretched asleep upon some dingy straw at the entrance to the hut. Jack crept carefully about him, without disturbing his snores, and got in under the sloping roof.

"Room for the dog?" he asked in a whisper, over the sleeper.

"Of course!"

And the next moment Lion was at his young master's side and in his arms.

"Old Lion! ain't this luck!" said Jack.

Lion answered by thumping him with his tail and caressing him with his tongue. The rain pattered upon the boards above, and soon began to leak through in little streams upon them; but they neither heard nor felt it; they were fast asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOODCHUCK HUNT.

It was broad day when Jack awoke the next morning, and sat up on the straw, and rubbed his eyes open. There was Lion at his side, and one collier stretched upon the straw, and the other sitting on the log by the fire; there, too, was the smoking coal-pit. He remembered everything, except a blanket which had been spread over him in the night.

But he soon saw that it was not his friend sitting by the fire, but the other collier; it was his friend lying on the straw. Jack had a good view of his face, and was surprised to see how old he looked by daylight. He was really an old man. His eyes were shut, but certain odd movements of his hands about his chin showed that he was not asleep. Now he seemed to be feeling carefully at his throat for something, then one hand was withdrawn with a sudden jerk. Jack wondered for a long time what he was about; then he saw that the jerking hand held a pair of tweezers, with which he was pulling out his short beard, hair by hair.

Jack made a rustling movement, and the man opened his eyes.

"You're jest in time," he said, groping at his chin.

"Breakfast 's about ready," — fixing the tweezers. "Waiting, I thought I 'd" — jerk! — "take my baird off."

"Have n't you-a razor?" said Jack, horrified.

"What do I want of a razor? If I have that, I must have a looking-glass, and a strap, and a lather-box, and a lather-brush, and" — jerk! — "all sich things. Besides, a razor can't smooth the face off like a pair of tweezers; they take the baird out" — jerk! — "by the roots."

"Why don't you let it grow?" said Jack, thinking the operation must be painful.

"And go about looking like any old straggler?" said the collier, turning his eyes on Jack in a sort of reproachful astonishment. "I 'm a charcoal-burner, and a miserable dog enough, in my way, but I ain't so low down as that!" and he went on, groping at his chin, and jerking.

As this was before beards had come into fashion with us, and few besides tramps and foreigners went unshaven (though side-whiskers were orthodox), Jack felt that he had insulted his friend and ought to beg his pardon. Before he could think what to say, however, the collier repeated, still busy at his toilet, —

"No, sir! I ain't so low down as that! I live from hand to mouth, and half the time in the woods, and I may be as black as the coal I work in, yet no Sunday goes over this head and sees any hair about it that don't belong there. As reg'lar as the day

comes round, jes' so reg'lar — " And he finished the sentence with a jerk.

"Do you go to meeting?" Jack respectfully inquired.

"I can't exactly say I'm a meetin'-goin' man. Yet a man may have some idee of decency, for all that. Sundays, we watch the pit when it's necessary, but otherwise we have a sort o' kind o' day o' rest, and maybe supply ourselves with a little fresh meat by killin' a squirrel or a woodchuck. Have ye seen Grodson?"

"Who is Grodson?"

"He is my pardner. His name is Grodson, and my name is Danvers. Grodson!"

The "pardner" — a tall, lank fellow, with high cheek-bones and straight black hair that gave him the look of an Indian — came loungingly up to the door of the hut. Stooping a little, he looked in and saw Jack, whom Danvers introduced as the boy that wanted to hire out for a few days.

Grodson turned gloomily away. "I don't want no boys to work about a pit I've anything to do with," he said, and walked loungingly back to the fire.

Jack felt quite disheartened at this reply; but Danvers said, "Never mind. He's cross 'fore breakfast. I'll try and talk him over arterwards, — though," he added, finishing his toilet, and putting up his tweezers, "I don't crack up the business, mind!"

Breakfast was soon ready, consisting of black coffee

from the kettle, pork fried in a spider, and potatoes baked in the ashes. It was eaten in primitive fashion by the colliers and their guest, sitting on logs and holding pewter plates on their knees. Yet everything tasted good to Jack, who was used to rough life, and who would have been happy could he have won from Grodson a smile for himself and a piece of meat for his dog. As it was, the breakfast prepared for two was consumed to the last morsel by them, and nothing was left for Lion.

"I 'd give him a chunk," Danvers whispered to Jack while Grodson was putting away the dishes, "but I don't want my pardner to git a prejudice agin ye 'fore I 've had a chance to talk him round. The best thing for you is to go out and see if you and your dog can find a woodchuck."

"Of course! where?" said Jack, eagerly.

"They 're plenty over on Chatford's side-hill yender. They come out of their holes to feed on the young clover. Watch till you see one a good piece from his hole, then rush in; a boy can out-run one, say nothing of a smart dog."

Elated at the prospect of finding game for Lion, and of being able perhaps to repay the colliers' hospitality by bringing in a woodchuck, Jack started off. The morning was cloudy, yet not unpleasant. To avoid the swamp, he passed through the borders of a high woodland, under branches still dripping with the last night's rain. The trees were in the tender foliage of early summer, the air was singularly fresh

and sweet, a few birds twittered unseen among the boughs, and the heart of the homeless boy stirred with a strange delight.

He saw two or three woodchucks run into the ground as he approached the hillside. One came out again, and sat up on the edge of its hole with its fore-feet on its breast, watching, while Jack, keeping Lion behind, crept stealthily along by a fence; then suddenly, while he was still five or six rods off, it gave a shrill whistle and dived once more into the earth.

Between this hole and the fence there was a stone-heap, behind which Jack now hid himself with Lion, and waited for the woodchuck to reappear. He had watched but a few minutes when he saw something like a grayish-brown nose pushed up over the little circular ridge of yellow dirt about the hole. There it remained for a long time, so still that he began to think he was mistaken about its being a nose; then suddenly, almost while he was winking his eyes, the nose had gone, and the woodchuck was sitting erect again on the heap of dirt over his hole.

"O, if I only had a gun!" thought Jack. As he had no gun, he remained quiet in his hiding-place. In a few minutes his patience was rewarded by seeing the animal get down upon the grass and begin to feed. He ate a little clover, then sat up on his hind legs again; then he ate a little more, and stopped to look about him without sitting up; and so kept on, gaining confidence with each observation he took,

and getting farther and farther from his hole. All this time Jack was so intent watching his game that he did not perceive that he was himself watched by a man and a boy, creeping down over the hill behind the fence.

At length the woodchuck was almost as far from the hole as the hole was from the stone-heap. "Now 's my chance!" Jack thought, and sprang forward with Lion. "Sick, sick!" he shouted.

The dog caught sight of the woodchuck; the woodchuck had already caught sight of the dog. Jack expected to see it run for the hole it had left, and thought he was sure of it, when it began to run the other way. It scampered off as fast as it could on its stout legs; Lion followed with swift bounds, but was still some yards behind, when it plunged into another hole, which Jack had not seen.

At the same moment the man and the boy, who had been watching Jack, jumped over the fence, and threw themselves down in his place behind the stone-heap.

Lion sprang at the hole, and into it as far as his shoulders, in a great fury; and presently backed out again, growling and snarling, and tugging hard at something, which he shook with all his savage might. Great was Jack's joy and astonishment, on reaching the spot, to see that it was the game he had thought lost. The woodchuck, as his head came last out of the ground, turned to give battle; thereupon Lion seized him by the throat, and, shaking him again,

rattled a chain that held a trap that clasped a leg of the animal.

The chain was fastened to a stake driven deep into the ground. Stake and chain had been carefully



covered with earth, like the trap itself; yet experienced woodchucks had wisely avoided the hidden steel jaws, till this unlucky one was driven into them by a danger that left him no time for reflection.

As soon as Jack could make Lion leave off shaking the game, he took it from the trap, turned it over,

lifted it, and laid it down again. "What a fat one!" said he, thinking it would make the colliers, himself, and Lion, all a good dinner. But was it his? He could not but remember — though he would have been very glad to forget — that the trap had it first. Should he disregard the trap's claims and carry off the prize? He was rapidly making up his mind to do so, — lifting the woodchuck again to see how heavy it was, and at the same time glancing around to make sure he was not observed, — when his eye caught sight of a face peering at him over the stone-heap.

Jack dropped the woodchuck again, and began to press its fat sides with his foot, looking down at it, and whistling, with an air of exceeding innocence. Thereupon the man and boy advanced from their hiding-place.

Jack, with his hands in his pockets, and his head on one side, stopped whistling, and awaited their approach. Their excited faces warned him of trouble; they came with no friendly intentions, he was sure. The man — a farm-laborer, bareheaded, in shirt-sleeves, with a stoop in his shoulders, a retreating chin, and a little narrow mouth open (but for two conspicuous front teeth closing on the nether lip, and giving to the orifice they covered an expression ludicrously like that of some rodent animal) — marched up to Jack, fixing upon him a pair of small, twinkling gray eyes, and said, "I guess you 're jest the chap I want!"

“What do ye guess ye want me fer?” said Jack, perceiving in the man’s face and tone of voice certain curious signs of fright.

The man cast an anxious look at Lion, then said, — enunciating his *b*’s and *p*’s and *w*’s with the aid of the said front teeth, doing service in place of the upper lip, which was not on speaking terms with its companion, “Wal, to be plain about it, — stealin’.” And he laid a hand on Jack’s shoulder.

“What have I been stealing?” said Jack, looking almost *too* candid and guileless for the occasion. “If you mean this here woodchuck that my dog drove into the trap —”

“Come, now! there’s reason in all things,” said the man. “It’s for stealin’ somethin’ ’sides woodchucks, and you know it!” At the same time, seeing that the dog remained neutral, he tightened his grasp of Jack’s collar.

Jack grew pale, remembering his theft of the night before, and taking all at once into his soul the full significance of the man’s bare head. But he was not cowed; he thought, “I’ll give him his old hat; then if he won’t let me go I’ll set Lion on to him.” He had actually taken off the hat, and was about presenting it, with a reckless laugh, — as if the whole affair were a good joke, — when his captor said, “In the fust place, what have you done with the stolen prope’ty?”

“With the — what?” said Jack.

“The things you ’ve stole; own up now!”

"The *things*? Oh!" said Jack. He scratched his head, as if he had taken off the hat for that particular purpose, and covered himself again. "What things?"

And it may be observed that now, knowing himself to be really guiltless of the theft he was charged with, he did not take the trouble to look so very innocent, and that his reckless air had vanished.

"What things! As if you did n't know better 'n anybody! Come! if ye won't own up, you must walk along with me."

"I can walk along with ye," said Jack, having given up all idea of calling Lion to his aid. "But a feller can't own up to taking things he hain't took, can he?"

"Bring my hat, Phin!" said his captor; and it was brought from behind the stone-heap. "Now come along; I guess we 'll make ye hear to reason!"

"But what's to be done with the woodchuck?" said Jack, anxiously.

"Woodchuck belongs to me; it's my trap!" said the boy called Phin.

"Your trap would n't have ketched him if it had n't been for my dog," said Jack.

"Your dog would n't have got him if it had n't been for my trap," said the boy.

"Then le's divide," said Jack, as he was led off by the hand on his collar.

"See about that!" grinned the boy, following, and dragging the woodchuck.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ALARM AT PEACH HILL FARM.

THE man who had thus taken Jack into custody was Mr. Philander Pipkin of Peach Hill Farm. Peach Hill Farm was owned by the Chatfords, and "P. Pipkin, Esq." (as his name appeared carved by his own jack-knife on the stable door) was their hired man.

Early that Sunday morning he had started, milk-pail in hand, for the barn-yard; but had dropped his pail in consternation as he came in sight of the said stable door. A minute later he was back in the Chatford kitchen, calling loudly, "Mr. Chatford! Mis' Chatford! Boys! Heavens an' airth!"

"Well, Mr. Pipkin! Who's killed now, Mr. Pipkin?" said a sarcastic female voice from the pantry, and a tart female face peered out at him from the pantry door.

"Miss Wansey," replied Mr. Pipkin, sternly, "I've nothin' to say to you, understand!"

"O, have n't you! very glad to hear it!" said Miss Wansey. "Then mabby you'll be so good as *not* to make a person deaf screaming out so in a person's kitchen!"

"A person's kitchen!" retorted Mr. Pipkin. "It's

as much my kitchen as it is your kitchen, I guess ! Where 's Mr. Chatford ? ”

“ Mr. Pipkin,” replied Miss Wansey, from the depths of the pantry, “ I ’ve nothing to say to you ! ” and she rattled the breakfast knives and forks.

One would naturally infer, from this slight altercation, that these two members of the Chatford household were not on the very best terms with each other. Miss Wansey was to the kitchen what Mr. Pipkin was to the farm ; and their mutual functions bringing them into frequent collision, each had grown jealous of the other’s dictation, — Miss Wansey accused Mr. Pipkin of assuming too much authority, and Mr. Pipkin charged Miss Wansey with putting on airs. It was now at least a year and a half since they had consequently had “ nothing to say ” to each other, and had said it severely.

“ What is the matter, Philander ? ” said a mild, motherly woman, hooking her gown as she came into the kitchen.

“ Matter, Mis’ Chatford ! Matter enough ! ” said Mr. Pipkin. “ Deacon up yit ? ”

“ He is getting up,” said Mrs. Chatford, her calm voice and serene demeanor in beautiful contrast with Miss Wansey’s tartness and Mr. Pipkin’s excitement. “ Are any of the creatures sick, Philander ? ”

“ Wuss ’n that ! ” said Mr. Pipkin, pressing forward through the door by which she had come in. There was a sitting-room beyond, and a bedroom beyond that, in the door of which appeared Deacon Chatford

himself, half dressed, with one boot on and the other in his hand.

"What 's woke ye up, Pippy?" he asked, with a half-amused, half-anxious face, as he stooped to pull on the other boot.

"You 'll say woke up!" Mr. Pipkin exclaimed. "Jes' come out and see! Stable door wide open, and Old Maje gone!"

Mr. Chatford looked somewhat less amused, and somewhat more anxious; and he began to button his suspenders with awkward haste.

"Gone? Not stolen! He has probably slipped his halter, pushed the door open, and got out. I don't believe you hooked the door last night."

"Yes, I did! No, I did n't! Yes," said Mr. Pipkin, confusedly, — "I either hooked it, or I did n't hook it, I forgit which, but it makes no odds, — you'd gone over to the Basin with Old Maje, and I went to bed 'fore you got home."

Mr. Chatford ran his fingers through his uncombed hair. He paid frequent visits to the Basin, and sometimes rode, and sometimes walked; he now remembered that he rode the night before, and wondered if he had been so careless, when he put up the horse, as to leave the stable door unfastened. "Most likely I did. Thinking of something else, probably." (He was a "terrible absent-minded man," as Miss Wansey said.) "You 'll find the old rogue about the place somewhere, Pippy."

"I don't know but what he *might* slip his halter

and push the door open," argued Mr. Pipkin; "but how could he git into the harness and hitch himself to the buggy?"

This was certainly a strong point; and Mr. Chatford, his hair tumbled, one trousers-leg lodged on the top of his boot, and one suspender hanging, looked to Mr. Pipkin for an explanation.

"Harness an' buggy missin' too," said Mr. Pipkin's front teeth and under lip.

"That alters the case! I'll be right out there! Call the boys, mother!"

Mrs. Chatford stepped quickly to the chamber door, and, opening it, called up the stairs, "Moses! Phineas! are you awake?"

Moses and Phineas, enjoying their Sunday-morning slumbers, murmured something indistinctly, and turned upon their pillows.

"Wake up!" said their mother. "Old Maje has been stolen, and you must help hunt him up!"

Moses and Phineas bounded to the floor in an instant, leaped into their clothes, and came scampering down the stairs. They reached the stable in a half-buttoned state, and found their father gazing ruefully at the vacant stall and harness-pegs.

"Well, boys," said he, "it looks as if we should n't do much ploughing to-day."

"Ploughing? Sunday?" said Mr. Pipkin. "I guess not!"

"I declare, I'm getting more absent-minded than ever!" said Mr. Chatford.

"Now you believe what I told you, don't you?" said Moses, the elder son. "If you had put a lock on the door when I wanted you to, this would n't have happened."

"We 'll have a lock now," said Phineas, the younger, sarcastically. "That's the way, — after the horse is stolen."

"I meant to have got a lock, but never could think on 't, — I'm so plaguy forgetful! Though I never thought before there was any danger from horse-thieves hereabouts."

"Padlocks ain't o' no great use, where any one's bent on breakin' in," observed Mr. Pipkin, looking carefully to see if anything else had been taken.

"What we want is a big dog," said Phineas, who had long been teasing for one. "But you are so afraid a dog will kill sheep!"

"Well, I shall have to take it from old and young now, I suppose!" said Mr. Chatford, good-naturedly. "What discoveries, Moses?"

"I can't see any wagon-tracks," said Moses, who had been to the street and returned.

"Of course not; it rained till four o'clock this morning. What shall we do, boys? — have a hunt for the thieves?" The boys were eager for the chase. "Well, run to the neighbors and stir them up. Put the old harness on the mare, Pippy, and I'll back out the old wagon. If the scamps had only taken that, I should n't care."

While Moses ran one way and Phineas the other,

and Mr. Pipkin harnessed the mare, Mr. Chatford walked back to the house, where he ate a hasty breakfast and put on his coat. Then he went out and climbed up into the old, faded, green-striped, one-horse wagon, which had scarcely been on the road for a year. "Shackling old thing! I hope it won't break down before I get out of the yard. I declare, Pippy! you must dash a few pails of water over these wheels, or the tires will be tumbling off. Lucky the roads are wet this morning; they 'll swell the wheels as soon as I get started. Ha! there comes Phin with Jason Welby! Any news, Phineas?"

"Yes, lots! Let me tell, Jase!" said Phin, holding his companion back as they came running.

"Let go, Phineas!" said Mr. Chatford. "If it's good news, no matter which tells it."

"He may tell; I don't care," said Jason, in a manly sort of way.

"O, tell if you want to! I won't!" said Phin, sulkily.

"Well," said Jason, stepping forward, "the thief paid us a visit last night, and we saw him."

"Who saw him?"

"Me and Ab. Something has been killing our chickens lately, and last night we thought we'd watch. So we hid in the trough under the shed, and by and by somebody come into the yard and went up to the stable door, and was opening it, when we stirred a little, to see what he was up to; then a dog growled

at us; then Ab said, 'Show your light!' for we had the old tin lantern under a kag. We rushed out; and there was a boy about as big as Phin or me, and a dog 'most as big as he was."

"A boy!" said Mr. Chatford. "What sort of a boy?" Thereupon followed a pretty correct description of our unhappy friend Jack as he appeared to Jase and Ab.

Meanwhile a neighbor from the other direction arrived on the spot, and stood listening to the boy's story. He was a somewhat grim-looking, stiff old man; and at every pause in the narrative he nodded his grizzled head and compressed his lips and scowled at Jason. He did not speak till Jason had finished; then he said, "Good morning, Neighbor Chatford."

"Good morning, Squire Peternot. You've heard of our misfortune?"

"Yes, Moses stopped at my house. You say," the squire turned to Jason, "that that boy was a driver on the canal, and had been flung into the water, and had n't got dry when you saw him?"

"That's what he told us."

"Well! that same boy came to my house with the same dog, but with a very different story. I'd just got into bed, but wife had n't blowed out the light, when he knocked, and I got up and opened the door." Here followed a circumstantial account of Jack's interview with the squire, — sufficiently accurate, but not flattering to our young friend's character and appearance. "He did n't talk canal to *me*; he told *me*

he had come out from the city in the morning and had been looking for work all day. I knowed he was a liar and a thief," said the stern old squire, whose harsh opinion of poor Jack seemed now to be fully confirmed by Jason's story. "Why, the little heathen didn't even think of its being Saturday night, and that to-day was Sunday!"

"O, well," said Mr. Chatford, with a droll twist of his cheek and a humorous glance of the eye towards Mr. Pipkin, "some who I hope are not heathens are liable to forget that fact now and then, — hey, Pippy?"

"That's a fact!" said Mr. Pipkin, with a responsive pucker and twinkle. "There's Elder Corey, — as good a church-member as any on ye, — he thrashed oats in his barn all one stormy Sunday, four year' ago, and the women-folks, they made quince preserves; and they never knowed their mistake till they was drivin' to meetin' in the big wagon next day, and seen the neighbors a ploughin' and puttin' out their washin's. 'What, to work Sunday, Brother Jones!' says the elder, thinkin' he ought to stop and rebuke the inickity. 'Sunday?' says Brother Jones. 'Then the minister and all on us have blundered, for we had reg'lar sarvices yisterday, and wondered how a little rain could keep *you* to hum.' The upshot on't was, the elder wheeled about, and druv hum, and him and his folks kep' Monday, — had prayers, read the Bible, and sung hymns till sundown, by hokey! I could name another sarcumstance, 'thout goin' so fur off,

nuther," added Mr. Pipkin, slyly, turning up his eye again at Mr. Chatford in the wagon.

Jack was believed to be a heathen and a thief, for all that, — the untimely telling of the story resulting in no way to his advantage, except perhaps as it delayed for a few moments Mr. Chatford's departure in pursuit of him.

Moses had by this time returned, and other neighbors were arriving, some on foot, one or two on horseback, and Mr. Welby and Ab in a wagon. The whole neighborhood seemed to be turning out in great excitement to aid in capturing the thief. Some thought he had gone one way, some another; and so it happened that, within an hour of the time when Mr. Pipkin found the stable door open, a dozen men and boys were zealously scouring the principal roads in that region, in search of poor Jack, and the horse and buggy he had not taken, while all the time he was innocently enjoying the colliers' hospitality within half a mile of Peach Hill Farm.

"Huh! you feel mighty big 'cause you told the news, and would n't let me!" said Phineas to Jason, with a sneer, as they parted at the gate.

"Well, if that ain't the meanest fling! As if I cared to tell it! I ain't so silly as all that. Be mad, if you want to." And with a highly independent air Jason walked off.

Thereupon Phineas relented. "See here, Jase! I ain't mad. Come back, and let's talk about the robbery. Say! going to meeting to-day?"

But Jase, instead of turning back, kept on down the road, singing carelessly,

“Phin is mad, and I am glad,
And I know what will please him ;
Take a stick and give him a lick,
And see if that will please him !”

He was gratified to hear a stone come humming and bounding after him, for then he knew that he had succeeded in exasperating Phineas. Thus encouraged, he repeated the pleasant quatrain.

Moses had taken a piece of pie in his hand and gone with his father in the one-horse wagon, while Mr. Pipkin and Phineas stayed to do up the Sunday-morning chores. This arrangement, though highly approved by the elder brother, was not popular with the two who remained behind ; Phin complaining because he was deprived of the ride and the fun, and Mr. Pipkin basing his objection to it upon the ground that it “needed a good, stout, courageous man to ketch a thief,” — that is to say, a man like P. Pipkin, Esquire. They who stayed were destined, however, to reap quite as much glory from the affair as they who went.

Having milked the cows, given the pigs and calves their breakfast, and eaten his own, Mr. Pipkin started to drive the cattle to the back pasture. Phin went with him, partly for company, and partly because he wanted to look at his woodchuck trap over on that part of the farm.

They had not been gone a great while when Phin

came rushing into the house, all breathless and aglow with excitement, shouting, "Got the thief! got the thief!"



"Who has? Where?" cried three or four voices at once.

"We have! Phi's coming with him!" And all ran to the door to see.

There indeed was Mr. Philander Pipkin marching

triumphantly by the corner of the barn, with his hand on the collar of the dirtiest, raggedest boy they had ever beheld. Mr. Pipkin's other hand dragged a dead woodchuck by the hind leg ; while Lion walked meekly behind, as if sorrowfully aware that his young master had come to grief.

“ He was trying to steal that woodchuck out of my trap,” said Phin. “ That ’s his dog, and I ’m going to have him for mine, when *he* ’s sent to jail.”

CHAPTER IX.

JACK IN CUSTODY.



'VE ketched the feller!" crowed Mr. Pipkin under his conspicuous front teeth. "Here 's yer robber, Mis' Chatford!" And, throwing down the woodchuck, that "stout, courageous man" laid both hands on his captive's ragged shoulders, as he pushed him towards the door. "Took *me* to ketch him! He could n't git away from *me*!"

"I have n't tried," said Jack, with an injured air. "My dog would have tore you to strings and ribbons, if I had said the word.

Come! you need n't choke me now!"

"You poor boy!" said Mrs. Chatford, compassionately, "is it true that you have stolen our horse and buggy?"

"Pretty likely I have!" said Jack. "But what

have I done with 'em? That's what I'd like to have him show me!"

"Mabby they 're in his trouse's pockets!" said the sarcastic Miss Wansey. "You've done a great thing, Mr. Pipkin! Dear me! that boy never would have gone about the country stealing horses and buggies if he had known *you* were alive!"

"Miss Wansey," said Mr. Pipkin, regarding her sternly, "I've nothin' to say to *you*! I'm talkin' to Mis' Chatford. He's owned up that he's the chap the Welby boys ketched breakin' into their stable last night, and —"

"Did I say breaking in?" Jack interrupted him, sharply. "I said I was going in to sleep on the straw."

"And I say, breakin' in, — that's what we call it," said Mr. Pipkin, with his hands still grasping the boy's collar quite close to his throat. "If he's stole our hoss 'n' buggy, he's hid 'em in some piece of woods, and of course he denies it. Had n't I better take him right over to Squire Peternot's and git him committed?"

"Bring him in here," said Mrs. Chatford; and Jack was taken into the kitchen, while Phin went to find a rope to tie the dog with. "There, Mr. Pipkin, you can take your hands off from him; he won't try to get away, — will you?" turning kindly to little Jack.

"What should I try to git away fer?" said Jack. "I've no place to go to; I can stay here as well as anywheres!"

This was spoken recklessly ; yet when he sat down in the chair placed for him, and looked up at the new faces about him, his heart was softened, and he began to feel that he would rather stay there than not. One was the motherly face of good Mrs. Chatford. Beside it was the sweet, kind face of her niece, Annie Felton, who kept the district school, and "boarded around," but always came to spend the Sabbath with her relatives. The bright little girl's face, looking upon him with such intense curiosity tempered with awe and pity, was that of Phin's younger sister, Kate. A fourth face was that of Miss Wansey, who was strongly inclined to take Jack's part, — perhaps because Mr. Pipkin was against him, — and to the poor little motherless, sisterless, friendless prisoner, even she looked not unlovely.

"No place to go to!" repeated Mrs. Chatford. "Have n't you any home?"

"Not much!" said Jack; "without you can call an old scow on the canal a home. But I've lost even that."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"With some charcoal-burners, over the other side of the hill. I went to them after I *did n't* break into Welby's barn," said Jack, casting an evil look after Mr. Pipkin, who was retiring in disgust. "Just go and ask *them* if I've stole any horses and wagons. My dog killed the woodchuck 'fore I knew he was in a trap; then, just as I was turning him over to look at him, that man come up and grabbed me."

"You told the Welby boys you had been flung into the canal, did n't you?"

"Yes, and it was true!"

"But only a little while before you told Squire Peternot that you had been hunting all day for work. Was that true, too?" asked Mrs. Chatford, with mild, penetrating eyes fixed upon him.

The muscles of Jack's face began to work, and he picked nervously at a hole in his knee, as if bent on finding a way out of his difficulty in that direction. Then suddenly he lifted his red, glaring eyes to her face.

"No; that was a lie," said he. "I thought nobody would want me if I said I had come off from the canal. Nobody wants a chap like me, any way. I thought I'd find work, and be something better than a driver. But it's no use!" Down went the red eyes again, filling with tears of desperation. "Everybody's agin me! I've no chance." And Jack began to wink hard, and grind his teeth together, while all stood round regarding him pityingly.

"Have you had any breakfast?" Mrs. Chatford asked, after a pause, with just the slightest tremor in her usually calm voice.

"Yes'm; the charcoal-burners give me some."

"Well, don't be troubled; no harm shall come to you here. I don't think you took the horse; but it will be better for you to stay quietly where you are till my husband comes home."

"I won't run away," replied Jack; "but I'd rather

go outside there and stay where my dog is, if you'd jest as lives."

"You can," said Mrs. Chatford.

So he went out, and sat on a log of the woodpile ; and Lion came up to him there, and licked his hands and face, wagging his tail for joy.

Phin followed with a rope in his hand.

"I wish you'd put this on his neck ; he won't let me," he said.

"What will I put a rope on his neck fer ?" said Jack, making Lion lie down between his knees.

"So as to tie him," Phin replied, with a rather foolish smile.

"What's he to be tied fer ?" said Jack.

"O, to keep him ; I want him !" said Phin, holding out the rope. "I'll take good care of him ; — you can't do anything with him now, you know."

"What's the reason I can't do anything with him now, you know ?" said Jack, without appearing to see either the rope or the argument.

"Why, you're took up, and you're going to jail," replied Phin.

"Ain't you sorry for me ?" Phin had not thought of that. "Guess you'll cry when I go to jail and you git my dog, won't ye, — hey ?"

This was said with such a superior, saucy, and defiant look, that Phin was quite abashed by it ; for it made him feel that in this ragged little driver he had encountered a youth of larger experience and greater resources than himself.

"Maybe I'll buy the dog of you," he said, blushing, as he quietly dropped the rope on the woodpile.

"Maybe you will, O yes! When I set him up at auction, you can bid him in!" And Jack put a derisive thumb to his nose.

"Is he hungry?" Phin asked.

"I don't think he's seen the time since I've owned him when he was n't hungry," replied Jack. "Git me a piece of bread, and I'll show you a trick."

Phin ran eagerly into the house, crying, "He's going to make his dog do a trick! I want something for him to eat!"

Miss Wansey, who was of an economical turn of mind, puckered her mouth severely, and was about to deny the request, when Mr. Pipkin struck in with, "Don't you go to feedin' that great dog! he'll eat more 'n a man!"

"If he eats more than *some men*, he'll eat enough for three!" said Miss Wansey, and she went straight to the pantry.

"Some men?" echoed Mr. Pipkin. "*I ain't* a great eater, I'm sure; I'll leave it to Mis' Chatford! There's reason in all things. I never *quarrel* with my victuals; I do my dooty by 'em, and that in a perty straightfor'ard, honest kind o' way; and that's better 'n pretendin' I hain't no appetite, and then pickin' for the best on the table, like *some other folks*," raising his voice, to make himself heard in the depths of the pantry.

"Mr. Pipkin," said Miss Wansey, coming out with

the end of a loaf in her hand, "I've nothing to say to *you!*"

Phin took the bread, and ran out in great glee, while Kate and the schoolmistress and Miss Wansey, and even Mr. Pipkin, went to the door to see the trick.

Phin, always ambitious of playing an important part, gave only a small piece of the bread to Jack, keeping the rest in his own possession.

Jack held the piece on his fingers, and said, "Sit up, Lion!" Lion sat up. "O, farther off than that!" and the dog, removing to the distance of three or four yards, again put himself into an erect posture, with his fore-paws hanging.

"Speak!" said Jack. Lion barked. "Louder!" said Jack. The dog spoke louder. "Now catch!" said Jack, and gave the bread a toss. Lion's jaws flew open like a trap, and when they closed again the morsel had disappeared down his throat.

"Ain't he splendid?" cried Phineas, turning to the audience as if he had been master of the entertainment, and Jack and Lion his performers.

"Give me some more bread, and I'll show you another trick," said Jack.

Phin broke off another piece, which Jack held up. "Roll over, and then speak!" Lion rolled over, and spoke, and again got his reward. "Now roll over three times, speak twice, turn round on your hind legs once, and speak again. He'll want a good large piece for that."



"Now you 'll see something!" cried Phin to his audience, as he gave the morsel.

"I don't believe he can remember all that!" said Kate, wonderingly.

"You 'll see!" said Phin, with the greatest faith in his performers.

"Now, Lion!" cried Jack. And Lion, having rolled over punctually three times, spoken twice, and turned round on his hind legs once, spoke again, in

exact accordance with the programme,—all to the great astonishment of the spectators, who, watching the dog, did not perceive that Jack gave him some slight signal for each motion he was to make.

“Did you ever know before that a dog could count?” Phin asked, triumphantly.

“I ’ll show you a better trick than that,” said Jack. He made Lion sit erect, then placed a piece of bread on the end of his nose, which was pointed towards the zenith. “Now wait,” said he, “till this young gentleman counts ten; then snap. Count!”

Phin, blushing with pride at being called “this young gentleman” and made to take so distinguished a part in the performance, began to count,—“*one, two, three,*”—very pompously. Jack kept his eyes on Lion, who kept his eyes steadily on Jack. Phin thought he would not stop at ten, and was counting right on; but before he could say “*eleven,*” the dog’s mouth flew open and the piece of bread dropped from his nose down his throat.

“O, that’s the best dog I ever saw!” cried Kate, running into the house. “Do, mother, come out and see him!”

“I think you might all be better employed Sunday morning than to be playing tricks with a dog,” said Mrs. Chatford, going to the door,—perhaps with the intention of rebuking the young people for their levity. If so, she for a moment quite forgot her purpose, and an indulgent smile rippled her placid features at sight of Lion holding another piece of

bread on his nose and Phineas counting again. She considerately waited for the conclusion of the feat before uttering her reproof, and then something occurred which prevented her from uttering it at all.

"I swan to man," said Mr. Pipkin, "if there ain't the hoss 'n' buggy!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HORSE AND BUGGY.

JACK and his dog were forgotten in an instant. All ran to the corner of the house to look. There indeed was the buggy coming up the lane, with Mr. Chatford and Moses riding in it, Old Maje drawing it, and the mare led behind. At sight of so many astonished faces staring at them, Moses and his father began to laugh.

"Where did you find 'em?" cried Phin.

"In the queerest place!" said Moses, choking with merriment.

"We've got the thief here!" said Mr. Pipkin.

"Have ye? I guess not!" said Moses, holding his sides, while tears ran down his face.

Just then Mr. Welby and Abner drove up the lane; and it was observed that they were also laughing. After them came galloping two young horsemen who had likewise been thief-hunting, — Bill Burbank and Don Curtis, — both laughing so hard that they seemed ready to tumble from their saddles.

"If we hain't got him, where under heavens is he?" Mr. Pipkin demanded.

"It's the funniest thing!" said Moses, fairly doubling himself over upon the dasher in convulsions of

mirth, while his father said, "There ! quit your giggling, — it 's no laughing matter."

"What 's become of the old wagon ?" Mr. Pipkin inquired.

"O ho !" said Moses, straightening himself, and trying to get the kinks out of his sides. "I 'll tell ye in a minute !"

"Come, let 's hear !" said Mr. Welby. "We met your husband," — turning to Mrs. Chatford, — "and saw he had found his buggy, and Moses started to tell us about it, but he laughed so he could n't ; then his father whipped up, as if he was ashamed to tell."

"You see," said Mr. Chatford, trying to keep a grave countenance, — "(Do stop snickering, boy ! it 's Sunday !) — mistakes will happen," giving way to a very broad smile.

Moses had by this time alighted from the buggy, and wiped his tearful countenance, and got some control over his risible muscles ; then, supporting himself by holding on to one of the wheels, he let out the secret.

"We drove first to the Basin, where we could n't hear anything of the thief ; then we started up the canal road, but we had n't got far when the old wagon began to come to pieces. First, one of the forward tires slipped almost off, and I had to pound it on with a stone. Then when we started up I noticed that the nigh hind wheel was beginning to wobble. I got out again, and found the spokes on

one side loosening in the hub, and springing out of the rim on the other. We pounded 'em in as well as we could, and then turned around to go back to the Basin for another wagon; but the twist on that wheel was too much for it, and we had n't gone ten rods before it went down, all sprawling, like a daddy-longlegs. Then we picked up the pieces, and hooked a rail from a fence, and tied it under the wagon with the halter, and dragged it back to the Basin with the end of the hind axletree riding it. But just as we were going round the corner, to turn down to the tavern, Duffer's dog came out at us, and I thought he 'd tear us to pieces,—he was so excited by that rail!"

"I should think that dog would get killed some day," said Abner Welby. "He comes out at everything and everybody,—a great, savage bulldog! and Duffer only laughs if you complain of him."

"Well, we finally got to the tavern," said Moses; "but no one-horse wagon was to be had there. Just then old Tom Ball, the shoemaker, came along. 'There's a buggy standing under the store shed,' says he;—'I noticed it there the first thing this morning;—maybe you can take that.' So we went round to the shed, with a pretty large crowd following us, for a Sunday morning. Sure enough, there was a buggy." Here Moses showed alarming symptoms of going into convulsions again. "I said, 't was just such a buggy as ours! We went a little farther, and father said, 'But there's a horse hitched to it!'

Then the crowd of fellows — O ho !” And Moses leaned for support on the buggy-wheel.

“ Was it Old Māje ?” cried Mr. Pipkin.

“ Yes, yes !” said the deacon, impatiently, looking rather foolish.

“ And a sorry beast he was !” said Moses. “ He had had nothing to gnaw but the dry manger, all night ; and he was about as glad to see us as we were to see him !”

“ All night ?” echoed Mr. Pipkin. “ How could that be ?”

“ The thief got sick of his job and left him there, I suppose,” said Mr. Chatford, with a humorous drawing down of the facial muscles.

“ That’s what we thought at first,” said Moses. “ But I noticed all at once that father began to look queer. ‘ I declare,’ says he, ‘ the rogue has hitched him exactly as I always hitch a horse !’ Then I looked, and ’t was his halter-knot, for all the world !”

“ Fact is,” said the deacon, “ ’t was one of my unaccountable oversights. I suppose I shall never hear the last on ’t, — though what there is so dreadfully funny about it I can’t see.”

“ I swan to man !” said Mr. Pipkin, his narrow mouth stretching into an unusually open grin about his frontal ivory, “ it jest begins to git through my wool ! Deacon forgot he rode over to the Basin last night, and left the hoss hitched under the shed, and walked hum !”

“ And we’ve had the whole neighborhood out hunt-

ing the thief, when there was n't any thief!" said Moses. "Some are hunting him yet!"

"Never mind," said Mr. Welby; "they'll think they're paid for their trouble when they hear of the joke."

"Well, well! I'm willing you should make merry over my blunder," said the deacon. "For my part, I'm thankful the affair was no worse;—we've got the horse and buggy again, and there's nobody to blame but me. Though I thought I heard somebody say the thief had been caught."

"That's the best of it!" cried the sarcastic Miss Wansey. "Mr. Pipkin has been and done the bravest exploit! It took *him* to catch the thief! He has been off in the fields and picked up this poor little fellow, and brought him home, choking him half to death, as if he was some terrible robber!"

"Miss Wansey," said Mr. Pipkin, bringing the front teeth down upon the nether lip in his severest manner, "I've nothin' to say to *you*!"

CHAPTER XI.

JACK WAITS WHILE THE DEACON SHAVES.

JACK had approached to hear the diverting adventure of the horse and buggy, and all eyes were now turned upon him. He stood in partial eclipse behind Mr. Pipkin's stooping shoulders; and he looked so slight of stature, and so amiable of countenance (he was actually tittering), — so little, in short, like the brigand he had been taken for, — that the absurdity of his arrest became apparent to every one, and caused another good laugh at Mr. Pipkin's expense.

"That 's the boy Jase and I saw in our barn-yard last night," said Abner Welby.

"Yes! and the boy you all thought was the thief, jest as much as I did!" grumbled the aggrieved Mr. Pipkin; "though now one would think I was the only fool, by the way I 'm laughed at."

"I would n't stand it, Pippy!" said Mr. Chatford, with mock sympathy. "They've been laughing at me just so. But tell us how you found the boy."

Phineas now eagerly struck in, and made himself glorious in his own eyes by telling the story of Jack's capture to an ever-increasing audience, — for more of the unsuccessful thief-hunters had by this time come in, and curious neighbors were arriving. "And you never see anybody so scared as Phi was, — afraid the

dog would eat him!" said the little traitor, who had shared all his companion's fears, and had kept carefully behind until all danger was over.

"Scared?" said Mr. Pipkin, indignantly. "I wa' n't scared the leastest mite in the world. *You* hung back so, I was afraid the thief would git away, — that was all that troubled me."

Here good Mrs. Chatford made herself heard. "No more disputing! Here's this poor boy, who turns out to be no thief at all, but an unfortunate wanderer, without home or friends; for my part I believe him when he says he is seeking honest work; and now here's an opportunity for somebody to do a good action. Just hire him, some of you, and give him a chance."

"Why don't you do that yourself, Mrs. Chatford?" said Bill Burbank from his saddle.

"I would willingly; but we've two boys of our own, and a man besides."

"That's just my case," said Mr. Welby. "The boy ought to have a chance to earn an honest living; but, fact is," — lowering his voice slightly and talking over the back of his wagon to the deacon, — "he's a profane wretch, and he'll corrupt all the boys about him." And, having launched this formidable judgment in the way of Jack's fortunes, the worthy farmer drove off with his own virtuous son Abner.

Jack heard, notwithstanding the lowered tones, — as did everybody else; and the hope that had kindled in his countenance a moment before died out of it. He

hung his head betwixt shame and gloomy desperation, and looked about him for Lion, as if seeking support and solace in the one friend there was no danger of his corrupting, and that loved him, "profane wretch" as he was.

"Where are you going, my boy?" said Mrs. Chatford, with deep pity and concern, as he was starting off.

"Who cares where I go now?" said Jack. "Nobody wants a feller! I'm to be took up for stealing, and then set adrift agin, jest as folks take a notion, I suppose."

"Wait! stay! don't be hasty!" cried the deacon. "Come, Burbank! take this boy;—you're alone with your mother; you have to hire a good deal; it'll be money in your pocket, and a blessing to him, if you'll make a home for him. Come, Bill!"

"I'm afraid the little wretch will corrupt me!" laughed Bill.

"Why don't you offer him to me, deacon?" said Don Curtis, grinning at his own absurd suggestion; for he was a sort of vagabond himself, with but one known virtue, and that was his entire devotion to his friend Bill.

"I should be afraid *you* would corrupt *him*," replied the deacon.

"There! you've got it now!" laughed Bill, and galloped off, followed by his faithful companion.

"Mr. Peternot," then said Mrs. Chatford, earnestly, to the squire, who was once more on the spot, dressed

for meeting, and so transformed by a black hat, shining broadcloth, and a stiff, high stock that put his neck in pillory, that one who knew him only in his every-day attire would scarcely have recognized him, — “now, Mr. Peternot, you have no children at home, — take this poor orphan and give him a trial, won’t you?” But she pleaded in vain.

“If I have anything to do with him,” said the squire over his tall stock, with stern emphasis, “it will be to commit him for vagrancy. Nothing more nor less.” And he stalked off, stiff and grim and limping, with his horn-headed cane.

Mr. Pipkin and Moses had by this time taken the horses to the barn; Annie Felton had gone with Kate into the house, Miss Wansey had returned to her work, the neighbors had dispersed; and now the deacon was left alone with his wife and Phineas and sullen Jack. He looked compassionately upon the ragged little driver, as the latter stood with downcast eyes, kicking the dirt with his toes, and waiting to know what was to be done with him; then passed on into the house, saying, “Well, I must hurry and shave; the first bell is ringing already.”

Mrs. Chatford followed him in. “Father, what do you think?” she asked, anxiously.

“I think just about as Mr. Welby does,” replied the deacon, helping himself to hot water.

“O, well!” sighed Mrs. Chatford; “there’s too much reason for thinking so, I know. But don’t you believe our boys have got principle enough to resist bad influences?”

"They 're just like all other boys. Put a vicious one with 'em and you 'd see the effect on 'em pretty quick. Manners are catching."

"That 's very true ; and don't you suppose our boys would have an influence over him ? I am sure there are good traits in that poor child ; they only need to be fostered and brought out. Suppose one of our boys had been left an orphan, and thrown into bad company, and had no better chance for himself than that boy has !"

The deacon coughed uneasily as he loosened his shirt-collar and applied a copious lather to his face, before the kitchen looking-glass.

"I don't know what to say. The truth on 't is, Bill Burbank ought to take him. Or the squire. But I should pity the boy if the squire had him ! — Will you lay out my clean shirt, mother ? — I wish Pippy had let the ragged little tramp alone !" And the deacon honed his razor while his beard was soaking. "Well, what 's wanting, Phineas ?"

"That 's the best dog ever you see !" said Phin, slipping into a chair beneath the mirror, and looking up into his father's face with a very sweet, insinuating expression. "He 'll do all sorts of tricks, and he 's a grand, good watch-dog, and — say ! can't I have him ?"

"Nonsense ! we don't want a big dog like that ! Get away ; you 'll make me cut me."

"You 'll have a horse stolen in earnest, by-m-by. He 'll take care of the stable. Say, father ! if I can buy him, may I ?"



"Not Sunday. Why ain't you getting ready for meeting?"

"I guess I sha' n't go to meeting to-day; got a headache," murmured Phineas, feebly. "Maybe he won't be here with his dog to-morrow; and — say! — if he 'll take a dollar for him, may I give it?"

"Wait till to-morrow and we'll see. Come! get out of my way. I don't believe your head aches so but what you can go to meeting."

"It does — it aches to split! He 's going back to the charcoal-burners', where he stopped last night; they 've partly promised to take him."

"They 're no more fit to bring up a boy like him than anything in the world!" said Mrs. Chatford. "He might just as well be on the canal as with such heathens as Danvers and Grodson. They 'll teach him shiftlessness and Sabbath-breaking, and everything that 's bad."

"Nobody can teach a canal-boy much in that line!" said the deacon.

"And if he goes, he 'll take his dog with him," whimpered Phin, as if that would be the climax of evils. "He knows as much as a man. You can put a piece of bread on his nose —"

The deacon stopped shaving under his chin to ask, "Whose nose? the boy's?"

"No, the dog's. And he won't snap it till you count ten. I 'll tell the boy I 'll give him a dollar. Offer him a piece of bread, and tell him to roll over three times, and speak twice, and turn around once, and speak again, and he 'll do it all, regular as a clock."

The deacon stayed his razor again, and lowered his upstretched chin to ask, "Who will, — the boy?"

"No, the dog. You know I 'm talking about the dog, — only you want to plague me! Why won't you hire him, pa?"

"Hire who, — the dog?"

"No, no, the boy!" snarled Phineas.

"But you said you were talking about the dog,"

quietly remarked the deacon, wiping his razor. "Learn to say what you mean, my son."

He looked out at the door, and saw Jack sitting patiently on the log by the woodpile, picking a rotten chip to pieces. "I 'm bothered if I know what to do with him! Bright-looking lad enough."

"He 's keen as your razor!" said Phin, who had tried Jack's edge.

"I 'm afraid he 's too keen. Who is going to meeting? If that boy stays about here, somebody must look after him."

"I will," cried Phin, eagerly.

"I guess so!" said the deacon. "Set a chicken to look after a hawk!"

"I 'll stay at home," said Mrs. Chatford, "and look after both boys."

His point gained, Phin, leaning his head on his hand with an air of patient suffering, went out of the house, and found Jack at the woodpile. "How goes it?" he said, in a low tone of voice, meant to be confidential.

"Well enough," muttered Jack, still picking rotten chips to pieces.

"Folks all going off to meeting, perty soon," said Phin. "Me and you 's going to stay to home, — me and you and the dog."

"What am I going to stay here fer?" said Jack.

"What *are* you staying for?" retorted Phin.

"You see that woodchuck," said Jack, pointing. "Your folks want him to eat, I s'pose."

"Pshaw! we never eat woodchucks! Nobody does but such outlandish folks as Old Danvers and his man Grodson."

"Then mabby you won't mind my taking him."

"What do *you* want of him?"

"I'd like to give a piece to my dog, and the rest to Old Danvers."

"Old Danvers!" sneered Phin.

"Yes, Old Danvers," repeated Jack. "He was a good friend to me."

"Well, I don't care what you do with the meat; only I want the hide for a whiplash."

"Then shall I be taking it off fer ye?"

"Not now," Phin whispered, with a furtive glance at the house. "Folks won't let us skin woodchucks Sundays. Wait till they've all gone to meeting but ma; then we will." And, dragging the woodchuck away, he threw it down carelessly in a shady place behind the barn.

"Are you going to drive Old Maje to meeting?" asked Moses, looking in at the kitchen door. "He's done his share of standing under the shed, for one while; but folks will laugh if you leave him at home."

"They'll laugh if I do, and they'll laugh if I don't, I suppose. I expect to cause a pretty general smile when I drive up to the meeting-house steps this morning," said the deacon; "but I guess I can stand it. Old Maje ought to have a rest, if we can manage without driving the family wagon."

"You and Annie and Kate can go in the buggy," said Miss Wansey, "I'll ride with some of the neighbors, and Moses and Mr. Pipkin can walk."

"Mr. Pipkin," said that gentleman, coming in just then, "can possibly take care of himself, an' 'tend to his own business, 'thout any assistance from Miss Wansey."

Yet Miss Wansey's suggestion was adopted, and the deacon drove the mare. "Turn Old Maje out into the pasture, as soon as he has finished his mess," was his parting charge to Phineas. "And let that boy alone. And, see here, boy!" added Mr. Chatford, as he gathered up the reins, "don't you go to leading my boy into mischief while I 'm gone; mind!" and he shook his finger at Jack.

"Of course he won't!" said Phin, with a light laugh, thinking of Lion's delightful tricks, and the woodchuck behind the barn.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK'S TRANSFORMATION.

FARMER CHATFORD drove away with Annie and Kate, and joined the long, straggling procession of country vehicles that went rattling by, making Sunday at that hour seem livelier than any other day of the week. Mr. Pipkin and Moses had already started to walk, and Miss Wansey had been picked up by a passing wagon; Phin and Jack and Lion had mysteriously disappeared; and Mrs. Chatford was alone in the house.

Soon the last vehicle had passed, the distant ringing of the church-bell ceased, and perfect stillness followed, broken only by the crowing of a cock in the yard, the cackle of a hen, and the tick of the kitchen clock, — sounds which seemed a part of the solemn Sabbath quiet.

Mrs. Chatford, having taken a little time to set things to rights after the folks were gone, opened her Bible and her spectacles; but before beginning to read she thought she would see what had become of the boys. They were nowhere about the house. She looked in the orchard, but they were not there. Then she stood by the well, and marred the all-pervading Sunday silence by calling "Phineas!"

In the mean time that guileless youth had got Jack

and Lion behind the barn, with the woodchuck, a pocket-knife, and a whetstone; and there he was, diligently sharpening the blade, when he heard his mother's voice.

"What!" he said in a whisper, immediately adding, "Keep still! she won't know where we are."

"Phin-e-as!" she called again.

Another whispered response from the owner of that euphonious name, who kept on whetting the knife. Somewhat disturbed in her mind, Mrs. Chatford returned to her Bible and spectacles.

"There! she's gone in, — I knew she would," said Phin, feeling the knife-edge with the ball of his thumb. "Now we'll have this woodchuck's hide off in no time."

"She won't like it, will she?" said Jack, holding a paw whilst Phin cut the skin around it and made a slit up the inside of the short, thick leg.

"I don't much think she will," said Phin, laughing; and he went on cutting, followed by Jack, who stripped off the hide.

The woodchuck was dressed, and Lion had his share of it, and the pigs had theirs, and Phin was telling how the hide was to be tanned, when a motion of the dog caused him to look up. The very sudden manner in which Phin's countenance changed and his tongue began to stammer caused Jack to look up too. Within three yards of them, at the corner of the barn, stood Mrs. Chatford, with her spectacles in her hand, regarding them with mild displeasure.

"He wanted me to," said Phin, before she had spoken a word. "He is going to carry the meat over to Old Danvers and his man Grodson, to pay 'em for keeping him last night;—they 're suffering for a woodchuck."

"Have you been here ever since the folks went to meeting?" Mrs. Chatford inquired.

"Yes 'm, I s'pose so," said Phin.

"Then you were here when I called you?"

"Yes 'm."

"Why did n't you answer?"

"I did; I said 'what?' both times; did n't I, Jack?"

It made Jack wince to be obliged to say *yes* to this; for, after Mrs. Chatford's kind words to him in the kitchen, he had felt that he never could and never would deceive her.

"You did n't answer very loud, that 's certain," said Mrs. Chatford. "Now come into the house. If he wants to take the meat over to the charcoal-burners, he can."

"O, I forgot!" suddenly exclaimed Phin. "Pa told me to turn Old Maje out into the pasture, soon as he'd finished his mess."

"Well, do as he told you. And, Phineas!" said the good woman, her benevolent soul pleased with Jack's plan of relieving the sufferings of his friends, the colliers, "you can go part of the way with him, — if you won't play, — and carry a pie to poor old Aunt Patsy."

Phin would have liked to go all of the way with Jack, but the idea of turning aside to visit Aunt Patsy did not suit him; so he said, with a wonderfully sanctimonious look for a boy who had just been caught skinning a woodchuck, "Why, ma! it's Sunday!"

"No matter, if it's an errand of mercy you go on. But I remember you have a headache. Jack will carry the pie for me."

Jack brightened at the thought of doing something to please her. Phin thereupon changed his mind, and said he would go too; "He won't know the way, without I show him."

"Well, — only don't play," said Mrs. Chatford. "Come into the house first, Jack; I've something for you." For it had suddenly struck her that Jack was needlessly ragged and dirty. "I am going to give you some clean clothes to put on," she said, taking him into the kitchen. Then, looking at him again, "But would n't you like to give yourself a good washing, while I'm picking them out?"

"I don't think a good washing would hurt me a mite," said Jack, made glad at heart by the prospect.

"Take him right to the woodshed, Phineas, where you won't be afraid of slopping, — take plenty of soap and water and towels, help him about his bath, and then come to me when he is ready for his clothes. And, Phineas! he'd better use a comb. Here's a coarse one for the snarls, — and then a fine one."

In half an hour Jack came out of the woodshed

so completely transformed that Mrs. Chatford could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw him. He had shed every rag of his own clothing, and was clad in a clean, plain suit selected by her careful hands from the wardrobes of Moses and Phineas. He was thoroughly washed and combed, and his shining countenance testified to the wholesome combined effects of hope and of soap and water.

"Why! is it — can it be! — dear me!" said the gratified housewife. "I don't see but what you look as well as anybody's boy! Now if you can only put off all your bad habits with your old clothes, and put on new behavior with this clean suit, I shall bless the day that brought you to us!" And hopeful tears glistened in the motherly eyes that looked so kindly upon the outcast boy.

"I feel now as if I could begin a new life, if I only had a chance!" said Jack. "But in my old rags I don't believe I could ever have forgot I was a canal-driver."

"There 's a good deal in that," said Mrs. Chatford. "Well, these clothes are yours; and I think the best thing you can do with the old ones will be to bury them in the ground somewhere. All but your hat. That 's a good chip hat, — I had n't noticed it before."

Jack, growing suddenly very red and embarrassed, wished she had not noticed it then. "It 's a borrowed hat," he stammered.

"O, is it? Then I will give you one of the boys',

so you can have a hat of your own, and not be obliged to wear out somebody else's."

Poor Jack was quite overcome by so much goodness; and the feeling he tried in vain to hide caused the good woman's heart to warm towards him still more. "You ain't a bad boy, I know you ain't!" she said, pulling down the clean white cotton wristbands that had been Phineas's under the coat-sleeve that had belonged to Moses.

"But I don't see what you do all this fer me fer!" said Jack, passing the other sleeve across his eyes.

"Because you have been brought here for stealing our horse and buggy, when I am sure you never stole anything in your life!"

Jack gave a glance at the "borrowed" hat, and said, with a knot in his throat that made his voice very husky,—"I wish—I don't deserve it—just fer that!"

"Then I do it because you are a poor, friendless boy, and I can't help it!" said Mrs. Chatford, with a bright, tender, tearful smile. "Here is *your* hat; you 'd better put the other one away till you have a chance to return it."

Jack took the proffered hat,—it had been the elder son's,—and hung the "borrowed" one upon a nail, and went out of the house with a heart so full that it seemed to him that he must suffocate if he staved in her presence a minute longer.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW OLD MAJE CARRIED DOUBLE.

PHIN followed with a basket, in which were packed three quarters of the woodchuck for the colliers, and a custard-pie and a loaf of bread for Aunt Patsy.

"Here, take this," he said, "while I lead out Old Maje," — that patient animal not having yet set his weary hoofs in the grassy pasture. "Get him into the lane once, maybe we 'll have a ride."

Lion had in the mean while eaten what he could of *his* quarter of the woodchuck, and buried the rest. He followed as the boys entered the lane with the basket and Old Maje.

"Can you ride him with nothing but a halter?" said Jack.

"O yes!" said Phin. "He's just the cleverest old horse ever you saw. I've got on his back in the field sometimes, and rode him all about the lot, guiding him with just my heels and a hand in his mane. You can ride too, if you want to; he'll carry double. We can ride almost to Aunt Patsy's house, by letting down two pairs of bars and a rail fence; you can get off and do that."

I don't suppose any lad in the country ever refused an invitation to ride, under even harder conditions than those proposed to Jack. Phin led Old Maje up

to a big stone, and got on first; then he held the basket while Jack mounted behind him; then Jack took the basket, and Phin the halter strap. They got along very well until they were out of the lane. Jack had dismounted to let down the bars, and mounted again, when Phin said he "guessed they would ride a little faster."

Old Maje had walked thus far; but now he was urged into a trot. Hearing almost at the first rebound of the boys on his bare back the rattling of brown paper in the basket, he gave a frightened start, and broke into a canter. That made the brown paper rattle worse than before. Phin pulled in vain at the halter, and in vain Jack cried, "Hold him in! hold him in!"

"I can't!" exclaimed Phin, breathlessly. "Drop the basket!"

"That custard-pie!" cried Jack.

"Darn the custard-pie! He'll break our necks!" said Phin.

"Stick on! I can," said Jack.

To add to the excitement, Lion now came leaping and barking by the horse's side. Higher and higher bounced the boys at every pitching motion of the terrified animal, and Phin found himself fast working forward upon the narrow ridge of his neck.

"O, ketch hold! ketch hold!" he cried, giving the halter to Jack, and grasping neck and mane with both hands. "O, I'm going! I'm going!"

"No, you ain't; I've got ye!" said Jack.

With the arm that carried the basket he also supported his companion, while with the other hand he pulled hard at the halter. Old Maje did not mind his pulling in the least. His gallop, however, was very much like that of an old cow, and Lion was able to keep up with him. That sagacious dog seemed to know what the matter was ; for he made earnest springs at the horse's head, as if with intent to seize the halter and hold him.

They passed the brow of a hill, and began the descent of the other side. Phin was now well over on the horse's neck, doubled forward, clinging fast, with terror in his face and horsehair in his hands. Jack saw that it would not be possible to hold him on a quarter of a minute longer. A bright idea struck him.

"Here, Lion !" he cried ; "hold !" And he swung down the halter-strap until it was firmly gripped by the dog's teeth.

The effect of this manœuvre was astonishing to horse and dog and boys. Lion settled back, pulling sideways upon the halter with all his might ; the horse's head was drawn suddenly about, and the horse's body followed it, describing a curve so abrupt that his riders flew off at a tangent, the basket tumbled with them to the ground, and the pie went rolling like a wheel down the hill.

"Hurt ? Ye ain't hurt, are ye ?" cried Jack, on his feet in an instant.

Phin got up slowly, a ludicrous picture. I said the

pie went down the hill; I should have said the pie-plate;—the pie, flying from the basket, had been scattered along the earth, just where Phin, tumbling heels over head, must needs roll into it. He rose, spluttering, holding his hands far out from his body, and his fingers far apart, and looked down at himself, all plastered and dripping with custard.

It was impossible for Jack to keep from laughing at the sight. He was partially sobered by the thought, — “What if it had been *my* clean clothes?” when Phin, perceiving him inclined to mirth, flew into a fury.

“I’ll get it on to *you*!” — and he rushed to claw and embrace the offender.

“No, you don’t!” said Jack, defending himself with the basket. “Take care; you’ll get something worse than custard!”

Thereupon Phin, who was not surpassingly brave, desisted; and Jack asked, “What’s the good of pitching into me?”

“Laughing at me!” snarled Phin, wiping his hands on the ground.

“You’d laugh at yourself, if you was n’t so mad,” said Jack. “I never see so funny a sight!”

“You did it!” Phin complained.

“I?” cried Jack. “I was only a passenger. You’d have pitched off before you did if I had n’t held ye on.”

“You rattled that paper so!”

“It rattled itself; and how could I keep it still,

when every jump of the horse threw us half a yard up in the air?"

"You might have dropped the basket, as I told ye!"

"I was afraid of spilling the custard-pie," said Jack, and laughed again to think how he had saved it.

"Then you had to fling it out just where I would fall and get it all over me!" said Phin; and, having thus cast the blame of the catastrophe upon his companion, he began to feel better.

Lion had stopped the horse, and was now holding him. Jack gathered up the bread and the meat, which were uninjured, and made an excursion to the foot of the hill, where he found the plate with some of the undercrust still sticking to it; then, on his return, he worked for some time upon Phin, scouring him with wisps of grass and brown paper. Phin was by this time laughing with him.

"I might go over to Aunt Patsy's," he said, "and carry the crust, and let her scrape me clean, and in that way she might get her pie, — for she never'll get it in any other way, that's sure!"

This plan seeming hardly feasible, from the small prospect there was of Aunt Patsy's falling in with it, the boys got off the custard as well as they could without her assistance, and — Old Maje being now turned loose — pursued their way on foot.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ERRANDS OF MERCY."

THEY found at the coal-pit a merry fellow, whom Jack hardly recognized at first. It was not Danvers, and — could it be the dark, unfriendly Grodson? He was sitting on a log, talking in a very sociable way to himself, and every now and then throwing back his head as he indulged in the snatch of a song or a fit of laughter.

"He's part Indian, did ye know it? and he's tipsy," said Phin. "I'm afraid of him!"

"What's the good of being afraid?" said Jack; and he went forward with the basket and the dog, while Phin kept behind. "Hullo, Mr. Grodson!"

"Hullo!" returned Grodson, dubiously at first, turning and rolling his eyes at the visitor. "Welcome, my frien'!" — speaking thickly, and with difficulty. "Walk into m' parlor, ze spider to fly, ze perries' li'lle parlor 't ever you disspy!" And getting up from the log, he shook both Jack's hands with such overwhelming friendliness that Jack, in his clean clothes, feared that the tall, grimy collier was going to hug him.

"Where is Mr. Danvers?" said Jack.

"Gone a-courting," said Grodson, with a skip and a jump. "Did n't ye know Danv' 's courting a

woman: Come 'long and take a drink." And he picked up from behind the log a bottle which he branished in the air, singing, in maudlin style, —

"For this night we'll merry, merry be,
And to-morrow we'll be sober."

"I'm going to be sober to-day," said Jack, and he steadily refused the drink which he would have gladly accepted the day before. "I've brought you some woodchuck-meat, killed this morning; and now I must be off."

"Ain't ye going to stay with us?" said Grodson. "Come, we'll hire ye; and *this night we'll merry, merry be* — hurrah!"

As the drunken man tipped up the gurgling bottle at his lips Jack called out "Good by!" and hurried away, leaving the meat on the log.

"The idea of your hiring out to that man!" said Phin, keeping well ahead of his companion, and looking back to see if Grodson was after them.

"So I say!" replied Jack. "Last night and this morning that place seemed as if it would be a good home; and I don't know what I would n't have given for a pleasant word from Grodson. But now I could n't bear to stay there!" Mrs. Chatford's kindness and the feeling of clean clothes had made such a difference in Jack's way of thinking!

The boys went first to the woodchuck-trap, which had been left sprung, and which they now set in a new place, — Jack taking pains to show it to Lion,

and to warn him against ever putting paw into it. Then Phin said, "Le's go and carry the bread to Aunt Patsy."

"Where does she live?" Jack inquired.

"Just over the hill here. She owns a notch right in the corner of Squire Peternot's farm. That makes the squire awful mad, and he's tried every way to get rid of her,—to buy her out, drive her off, send her to the poorhouse, and I don't know what else;—but there she sticks, all the tighter 'cause she knows how he hates her."

"Widder?" asked Jack.

"Grass widder," said Phin, as they hurried on. "She's buried one husband, and she's got another alive somewhere,—he married her for her house and land, and when he found he could n't get 'em he went off. That's her house, over on the cross-road; and there she is herself, pulling down the old well-sweep. Le's hurry along, 'fore she goes in."

Aunt Patsy had got a bucket of water up into the curb, and, being too feeble to lift it, was dipping some out into a pail, when the boys approached the garden fence. Phin saluted her, not very respectfully, I fear, for she merely turned her head and gave him a scowl. She was dressed in a dreadfully soiled and patched old gown, and her gray hair, short and bristling, gave her a wild and ugly look.

"She's had so many tricks played off on her, she's suspicious of boys," remarked Phin. "Say, Aunt Patsy! here's a loaf of bread ma sent you."

"Your ma?" said Aunt Patsy, regarding him once more, with a softened expression. "Oh! Phineas Chatford,—is that you? Come into the gate, won't ye?"

"We 'll climb over, if we won't hurt anything," said Phin.

"There 's nothing here to hurt," said the old woman. "Everything 's going to 'rack and ruin, just like the owner. I was a smart woman once, and I had a neat, perty place; now look at us! Oh! oh!" and she gave short cries of pain as she attempted to lift the pail she had partly filled with water.

"Let me!" cried Jack, running to carry the pail for her.

"Whose boy be you?" said Aunt Patsy.

"I 'm nobody's boy," replied Jack.

"Guess you must be some relation to me; I 'm nobody's old woman."

"Where 's your husband, Aunt Patsy?" Phin asked, in order to hear her talk.

"Hugh! don't talk husband to me! I 've put one man under the sod, and I was a fool ever to strike hands with another. I thought the brute wanted me, but it turned out 't was my farm. A good many want that. But they won't get it till I 'm gone. Then Squire Peternot can drive his plough-share over my hath-stun, if he wants to, and if he lives arter me."

"Why don't ye sell?" asked Phin. "They say you 've been offered nine hundred dollars for your piece of land. Why don't you take it?"

"'T would tickle 'em too well," said the old woman. "I'd stay here if 't was only to spite 'em. Me and my land goes together. Squire Peternot can walk over us both, arter I 'm buried in it, if it suits him, but he must keep off while I 'm above the sod. Walk in. 'T ain't a decent house to ask you into, but it 's the best I've got. Thank ye for lugging my pail; ye can set it on this bench."

"Here 's the bread, Aunt Patsy," said Phin, placing the loaf on an old pine table beside some very dirty dishes. "Ma sent a custard-pie, but we got flung from the horse, carrying it, and here 's all that 's left of it, in this plate,—except what sticks to my clothes."

"Your mother 's the only Christian woman I know. I 'm glad to get a loaf of her bread, and I thank you for bringing it. No matter about the pie. Won't ye set down? I 'm horrid lonesome here, and I 'm glad to see any human face, if ye don't come to play tricks, or to pester me to death about my bit of land."

"Ain't there something else I can do fer ye?" said Jack, looking round upon her miserable abode.

"If you was a girl I would set you to work. I want somebody to slick me up. I 'm ashamed of my kitchen," said the old woman.

"Would n't you like to have these big sticks of wood split?" Jack inquired.

"Bless ye, yes! I've hacked and hacked at 'em. There 's an old axe in the shed."

"O, come along! I would n't!" said Phin, discouragingly. "Ma'll be wondering what's become of us."

"You did n't think of that when you set the trap," said Jack. "I'm going to crack up some of this wood for her, anyhow."

"What'll meeting-folks think if they go by and hear an axe in your shed Sunday?" said Phin to the old woman, as Jack began to chop and split the tough sticks.

"If they think I've a friend come to see me that's a better Christian than any of 'em, for all their church-going, they won't think fur wrong. They can go and set in a pew in their fine clothes, but who of 'em ever thinks of visiting the widder in her affliction? What boy is that?"

"He's nothing but a common canal-driver in my clo'es!" said Phin, cynically, envious of Jack's praise.

"He's a fine boy;—I'll give him something!" said the old woman, fumbling in a closet, while the axe still resounded in the shed.

"Of course!" said Phin, bitterly, half aloud; "bringing ye a loaf of bread is nothing,—*I* don't want any pay,—but splitting up a few old sticks is a great thing!"

"What's that you're saying?" the old woman inquired, coming away from the closet.

"Nothing much. What you going to give him?"

"Wait and you'll see. He's a better boy than you be, Phineas Chatford, if he *is* nothing but a

canal-driver in your clothes. I know a good boy when I see him, and I know a selfish boy when I see him." And Phin perceived by the sparkle of her eyes that she had heard every word he said.

Just then Jack came in bringing an armful of wood, which he laid down beside the hearth.



"O, that's nice! O, you're a blessed good child!" said Aunt Patsy, in a voice tremulous with grateful emotion.

"I've split up all there is," said Jack. "Shall I bring it all in?"

"That'll do for now,—thank ye, and bless ye! If I had some money I'd pay ye for what you've done, and get ye to come and split some more when Don Curtis draws it from my wood-lot. He cuts my wood to the halves, but he's so lazy I never know when he'll bring me any."

"I'll come again if I can," said Jack; "but if you had any money I would n't take it."

"I'm going to make ye a present, any way. Here's a little pocket-compass that used to be my fust husband's; it's no use to me, and I may as well give it away as to have strangers snatch it up arter I'm dead and gone."

Jack regarded the curious trinket with boyish interest, and it cost him no little self-denial to give it back to her. As she insisted on his keeping it, he said, "No, not to-day; I was n't working for pay. Next time I come, if there's a good lot of wood to split, maybe I'll take it."

That seemed to please the old woman, and, in the hope of receiving another visit from Jack, she put the compass away.

"Why did n't you take it? I would!" said Phin to Jack, on their way home across the fields.

"I d'n' know; somehow I could n't," said Jack. "I thought I would at first; but, then, she looked so miserable and poor and—I could n't!" And Jack startled both himself and Phin by—swearing!

It was just one little word, and it came out, not in malice or anger, but as a relief to the emotions of his heart. Phin turned and gave him a sly, strange look. Jack blushed to the tips of his ears. But for that fault of the unruly tongue he might have prided himself upon having behaved that day in a manner which would almost have met the approval of his unknown friend, the packet passenger. He had been flung from a horse, and had not sworn, — a marvellous circumstance! he had refused Grodson's whiskey, — which was quite as remarkable, since the little canal-driver had long since acquired a taste for grog; and he had carried the old woman's pail for her, and split her wood, from mere good-will, thus unconsciously obeying that friend's third rule of life, — "Help others"; and here he had spoilt all, as he believed, by that most untimely oath. Poor Jack! he did not reflect that there might be a difference in oaths, and that one which sprung to the lips from old habit, and the throbs of a heart struggling against its own emotions of pity, belonged not in the dark record of those inspired by violent thoughts. But he had sworn, — SWORN IN HIS CLEAN CLOTHES; what would Mrs. Chatford say, if she had heard him, or if Phin should tell her?

Yet it was perhaps a good thing for Jack that he had made that slip, since it served to keep him humble, and on his guard against giving way again to the old bad habit. And now the reflection that he had done other things that morning which she would

have thought wrong for Sunday caused him some misgivings, although he had her own son for an example.

"Who's that?" said Phin, looking back at Aunt Patsy's house.

"Danvers! ain't it?" said Jack.

"Old Danvers!" giggled Phin. "He's going to see Aunt Patsy! That's where he goes a courting! O, won't the boys laugh when I tell 'em? Old Danvers courting Aunt Patsy!"

And in his delight over this discovery Phin forgot all about Jack's swearing.

CHAPTER XV.

JACK AND THE BOOKS.

A LITTLE lunch was waiting for the boys when they came home, and as they ate their bread-and-milk and doughnuts Mrs. Chatford sat by and listened to their story.

"Well, I declare!" said she, when Phin explained how it happened that Aunt Patsy did not get the custard-pie, "that was too bad, now! But never mind; I'll send another next time I bake,—but don't you take it on Old Maje's back, riding double, with rattling brown paper in the basket!"

And this was the nearest approach to a reprimand which they received from that too indulgent woman.

"There's a Sunday school betwixt the services," she said, looking at the clock. "Now 's just the time for it. You boys ought both to be there. Did you ever go to Sunday school, Jack?"

Jack was ashamed to confess that he never did.

"You would n't want to twice," Phin whispered in his ear. "There ain't any fun in it."

Then Mrs. Chatford, in her spectacles, with a volume of "Barnes's Notes" open before her on the table, catechized Jack, and found him wofully ignorant of subjects in the knowledge of which her own boys had been trained up almost from their infancy.

Phin giggled: "Huh! never heard of the *Acts of the Apostles*! Why, I know half of 'em by heart!"

"No, — you know them by head; you don't know them by heart: I wish you did!" said his mother, more severely than Jack had thought it possible for her to speak. "You've learned your Sunday-school lessons, and plenty of chapters in the Testament, but dreadful little of 'em all you have in your heart, or else you would n't sit there laughing at this poor boy. It is n't his fault, it's his misfortune, that he has never been taught these things, which you can chatter off like a parrot, — and that's all the good they do you. Go and take a book and read, and don't let me see any more such conduct!"

Then Mrs. Chatford talked a long while to Jack, who soon got over his sense of shame and degradation, and listened gratefully. At last the time came for her to set about preparing the late Sunday dinner; and she turned him over to Phineas.

"Take him up to your room, my son, and read him the story of Joseph and his Brethren; he can't help liking that." For she had found that Jack could not read much himself.

Phin led the way up a flight of blue-painted, carpetless stairs, past a great chimney, and into a small, low chamber under the sloping roof. There was a bed in one end, a large blue chest in the other, and a strip of rag-carpet between, spread from the door to a little low window under the eaves. To get at the window one had to stoop pretty well, in order not to

hit his head. At one side of the window there was a chair, and at the other a light-stand; while the wall opposite was adorned with two rows of boys' clothing — coats, jackets, and trousers, hung upon nails — on each side of the door.

Humble as the room was, it was neat and comfortable and cosy; to Jack's eyes it was even luxurious.

"Is this all yours?" he asked.

"It belongs to me and Mose," replied Phin. "We sleep together. His clothes are that side of the door, and my clothes are this side. Half the chest is mine and half is his; there's a partition between, — I'll show you. He has a key to his till and I have a key to my till, and we can lock up from each other the things we're particular about. All these books are mine, — pictures in some of 'em. How does it seem not to know how to read?"

"I can read a little," said Jack.

"Let's hear ye."

"Will you show me when I come to words I don't know?"

"Yes," said Phin, with a treacherous smile, opening his Bible. "Here's about Joseph sold into Egypt, — ma told us to read that, and I suppose we must. Now, what's that?"

Jack struggled through three or four lines, Phin saying, perfidiously, "All right!" at every pause, — "go ahead; you're reading splendid!" — until the thing he was waiting for happened, namely, a ludicrous mistake; then he broke forth derisively, —

"Ho, ho! a coat of many collars! What sort of a thing is that? Collars! a coat of many collars! O Jack! if I could n't read better 'n that!"

Jack was tempted to swear, but he governed his wrath. "I won't read any more, if you are going to make fun of me," he said, throwing the book aside.

"I would n't! Collars!—O Jack! Come, le's look at the pictures in these other books. This Robinson Crusoe is mine. There he is on his raft, taking things from the wreck of his ship to the island. Who cares for the pictures, though?" Phin said, the next minute. "Put up the old books; and le's go out and play with the dog."

"I'd ruther look at the books," said Jack, gloomily.

"You may, if ye want to. I'm going out to find Lion,—if I can get out without *her* seeing me." And Phin went softly down the stairs, pausing only to look back and whisper, with a sarcastic grin, "Collars! O Jack! a coat of many collars!"

Left to himself, Jack soon forgot the sting of these taunts in the interest with which he turned over the leaves of the well-thumbed, old-fashioned picture-books Phin had taken from the chest. After all had been looked through, with the boy's true instinct he returned to Robinson Crusoe; and, lying upon the floor, half supported by his elbows, with the wonderful book before him, close under the little window,—his feet towards the open door, sometimes resting toes downward, and sometimes kicking in the air,—he diligently studied the page, pointing with his finger,

and tracing out the sense word by word, and almost letter by letter.

He was so absorbed in this novel employment that he took no heed when the morning's procession of vehicles went rattling by again, returning homeward, and the deacon's buggy drove into the yard. But when he heard the rustle of a dress and a light foot-step behind him, he looked up, and saw a pleasant face smiling down upon him from under a pretty pink bonnet. It was Annie Felton, the schoolmistress.

"Have you found something interesting?" she said, in a very gentle, winning voice.

"Yes 'm, if I could only read it well enough," said Jack.

"What is it? Robinson Crusoe! Not a very good Sunday book, I'm afraid uncle and aunt would think. You can read a little? Let me hear you."

Taking off her pink bonnet, she held it by the ribbons, as she seated herself in the one chair the room afforded, and looked down over Jack's shoulder, while he read laboriously, with careful finger on page, and restless heels in the air. She told him the hard words he could not make out, and corrected him when he read wrong, and explained this thing and that, all so pleasantly and encouragingly that poor Jack's heart, chilled so lately by Phin's pitiless jeers, warmed to a sweet glow of hope and gratitude.

"How long did you ever go to school?" she asked.

"Only about seven weeks, one winter, three years ago," said Jack. "Ye see, I hain't done much else



but knock about the world, and learn just the things I should n't, I suppose. I never should have gone to school at all, but that winter my father — or the man I called father — was off somewhere, and I boarded with a woman that sent me to school to git red of me. Since then I've always been put to work in stables winters, soon as ever the canal closed; then soon as it opened in the spring the old man would have me with him on the scow again."

"That was too bad, — if you wanted to learn," said Annie.

"I did n't think nor care much about it then. I got laughed at when I went to school, and that made me hate to go. But I'd give anything now if I could learn!"

"Well, where there's a will there's a way. I shall be glad to teach you, if you are where I can. I'll see you after supper. Here comes Moses now." And with a bright smile flung over her shoulder at Jack on the floor, Miss Felton tripped to her room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUNDAY DINNER.

THEN Moses came in.

"You seem to have taken possession here!" he said, looking down, not well pleased, at the intruder.

"Phin brought me up here; his mother told him to," Jack explained. "I'll clear out, if I'm in your way."

"No, never mind," said Moses, who was a good fellow at heart. "Seems to me you've changed somehow, since morning. What is it, — your clothes?"

"Your mother fixed me up a little," said Jack.

"Well, you needed it enough! Come in, Phi," said Moses, as Mr. Pipkin's conspicuous front teeth and stooping shoulders appeared at the door. "Here's your prisoner, making himself at home."

Mr. Pipkin observed Jack's comfortable attitude and improved appearance with decided disapprobation. "Wal, if that ain't jest like yer soft-hearted women-folks!" he said, indignantly. "There's reason in all things!"

"Except somebody's head," said a tart voice behind him.

"Do you mean my head, Miss Wansey?" retorted Mr. Pipkin, turning upon that lady, and standing

before her in all the dignity of a man insulted in his Sunday clothes.

"Tell Mr. Pipkin, Moses, if you please," said Miss Wansey, "that I've nothing to say to him! I think everybody will know whose head I mean — except the owner! And as for soft-hearted women-folks, — I wonder what hard-hearted men-folks would do without 'em!"

"Guess we could do very well without some of 'em!" said Mr. Pipkin, and laughed at his own wit.

Miss Wansey flung back the sarcasm with a toss, and addressed herself to Jack. "Don't you mind a word some folks say to you; *I* don't! Hired men sometimes take upon themselves very important airs. I won't name any particular hired men; maybe you 'll find out who they are, if you stay long in this house. I don't wish to be personal. I only say, don't mind. Hem!" And with a light cough Miss Wansey sailed away.

"Miss Wansey!" the wrathful Mr. Pipkin roared after her, "I've nothing to say to you!"

Jack, lying partly on his side, supported by his arm, looked up from his book to witness this altercation; while Moses sat on the bed and laughed.

"You 'd better *not* have anything to say to her, Phi! If she's so hard on ye now, where 'll you be when she makes up her mind to be personal?"

"Heavens an' earth!" said the excited Mr. Pipkin; "think I'm afraid of her? I don't care the shake of a goslin's toe-nail for all she can say. Soft-

hearted women-folks? I did n't mean *her*, by hokey!" And he stalked to his room.

Jack grinned, and returned to his book. Being somewhat critical in such matters, from his long experience on the canal, he conceived on the spot a high respect for Miss Wansey's tongue, and a very poor opinion of Mr. Pipkin as a master of the art of abuse.

Moses, having hung up his Sunday coat and put on an old one, went out. Then Jack saw Annie Felton and Miss Wansey go down stairs, and presently heard a table moved in the room below, then a lively rattling of dishes, — sounds full of interest to a hungry boy.

"Gitting ready for their big Sunday meal, — dinner and supper all in one," thought he. "Wonder if I shall be asked!"

In a little while there came a sound as of chairs placed at the table; and Jack, losing all interest in Robinson Crusoe, listened until he heard a noise of many footsteps, and a sudden clattering of chair-legs, by which he knew that the family were sitting down to dinner. A dead silence ensued for a few seconds; then a single low, monotonous voice was just audible for about half a minute; then knives and plates began to rattle, accompanied by an outburst of cheerful voices.

"They're at it!" murmured Jack, with a most lonesome feeling at his heart and stomach.

He pushed the books aside, and, creeping up close

to the window, looked out for something to divert his mind. There, behind the house, was the woodpile, with the familiar log, on which he had sat in the morning. Beyond that were two or three old peach-trees ; and, farther on, an apple orchard, beautiful in the sunshiny afternoon with its fresh foliage and green turf spotted and checkered with the soft golden light.

“O, ain’t it pleasant here?” thought he. “I’ll go out and keep Lion company till they get through dinner; then maybe they’ll give us some.”

Just then a quick, light step came behind him ; and, looking round, he saw Phin’s little sister Kate.

“Ma says, please come down to dinner,” she said, with a bright smile.

“Now?” said Jack, scarcely able to credit such good news; “with all the folks?”

“Yes, with all the folks,” replied Kate, laughing. “There’s a place for you, but she did n’t know where you’d gone.”

Tears of gratitude sprang to Jack’s eyes. Then he began to feel bashful, and murmured something about waiting till the rest were through. But Kate said, “She sent me to bring you down, and you must come!” and so he followed her.

It was a large, bountiful table to which he was invited ; around it the whole family were seated, filling every place (when Kate had returned to hers) except the one reserved for him. It was the very place he would have chosen, — at Mrs. Chatford’s right hand,

between her and her niece Annie. He felt dreadfully awkward and embarrassed, however, never having been in such respectable company before.

"Please give Jack some dinner," said Mrs. Chatford, passing his plate across the table to her husband.

"Jack? hey?" said the absent-minded deacon with a start, turning his eyes for the first time on his youthful guest. "I beg pardon! I—did you tell me, mother? Well, well!" And, with a curiously good-humored, puzzled expression, he proceeded to fill Jack's plate.

"Did you hear anything about the stolen horse and buggy to-day?" said Phin, laughingly, to his father.

"I guess a good many people heard more of that than they did of the sermon," replied Moses. "About fifty persons asked me about it; and when pa came in late, everybody turned to look at him, and every face was on the grin, even the minister's;—he had to use his handkerchief, and cough."

"I noticed I met with a rather cheerful reception," said the deacon, smiling. "It didn't trouble me; a man likes to be popular."

"As far as my observation went," remarked Miss Wansey, "somebody else was quite as popular as you, Mr. Chatford. I heard quite as much talk about the man who went out at the risk of his life and caught the terrible thief!"

"Guess you made all the talk about that, Miss

Wansey!" said Mr. Pipkin, glowering at her across the table.

"Mr. Pipkin," replied Miss Wansey, "I did not address my remark to you."

"By the way!" spoke up the deacon, as if a sudden thought had struck him, — "that boy! did he go off again?"

"What boy?" said Moses.

"Pip's prisoner. I left him sitting on the log. I worried about him in meeting-time, wondering what we should do with him, if he stayed; but I have n't thought of him since. I hope, mother, you did n't let him go off without doing something for him. Well, what 's the fun now?"

Everybody was laughing except Jack, who seemed somehow to be one cause of the merriment.

"I declare!" said the deacon, "I did n't know him! I was wondering who that young visitor could be! Well, well! who'd have thought? Soap and water and clean clothes, — they do make a mighty difference in people! What have you been about, to-day, my lad?"

Before Jack could answer, Phin, envious of his sudden popularity, chimed in, "He's been reading about the coat of many collars, for one thing!" and he was proceeding to explain the foolish jest, when Miss Felton interrupted him.

"Jack has never had the opportunities for getting an education which most boys have. But he is anxious to learn, and if he is near me, I am going to

be his teacher. He will be a good pupil, I know ; and when he can read well, I am sure he will not laugh at those who are not so fortunate."

It was plain that Miss Felton's influence was great in the family, for at these words Phin looked red and abashed, and the sympathies of the rest were evidently turned in Jack's favor. And as for Jack, how thankful and glad she made him ! The hot impulse, which had been again roused in him, to fling back the sarcasm in his own emphatic and vivacious fashion — a fashion which, I suspect, would rather have astonished the sedate Chatford family that quiet Sunday afternoon — now gave place to a better feeling, an indescribable thrill of gratitude and hope.

With Annie Felton and Mrs. Chatford on his side, he was humbly happy and content. Sometimes, in his lonely and wretched life, he had dreamed of what a mother and sister might be ; but he had never conceived of any beings on earth quite so beautiful and good as those two beside him. To be so near them, to hear their pleasant voices, and to feel — what he could not understand — the sweet, quiet influences which their very presence shed about him, made a far greater change in Jack than mere soap and water and clean clothes could have done, — a change in his inmost heart.

Although he had naturally good manners, our little driver had brought with him from the scow-cabin and the tow-path a few habits which seemed rather out of place at the farm-house table. Little Kate

laughed outright to see him put some salt on his unbroken potato, and, holding it in his hand, nibble it as if it had been an apple; and even Miss Felton had to



smile when he took up a slice of ham in his fingers, and, having first tried cutting it between his thumb and his knife (which did not prove so sharp as his jack-knife), resort to the more primitive method of tearing it in pieces with his teeth. These fashions he had undoubtedly acquired through the necessity he had so often been under of jumping ashore with

his dinner and eating it on the tow-path. But that did not account for his throwing his head back so far, and opening his mouth so wide, for the morsel of soft-fried egg he cast into it; and it must be owned that, when he ate with his knife, he sometimes thrust it unnecessarily far down his throat. He had an odd way, too, of seizing the implement midway between blade and handle, with a very determined grip, when he attempted to cut his meat with it on the plate, as Annie whispered him to do; and his elevated elbows, as he earnestly hacked and sawed away, gave him — it cannot be denied — altogether too much the appearance of a spread eagle. I am sorry, moreover, to record of him a strong tendency to lick the gravy from the blade, which was not considered a genteel custom even in those days, in respectable farm-houses, — although putting the knife itself into the mouth (not too far), instead of the fork, in eating, had not then come to be thought vulgar.

Miss Felton, kindly, and in low whispers, corrected these awkwardnesses in the boy; and he proved so apt a scholar that, when the pie was served, and he caught himself on the point of using his piece as if it had been a wedge, and his head a hard knot to be instantly opened by it, he checked himself in season, and, imitating her example, cut it on his plate.

CHAPTER XVII.

COUSIN SYD.

AFTER dinner, Jack understood the inviting smile Miss Felton gave him, as she threw a red scarf over her shoulders, and walked out into the garden ; and he followed her. From the garden they walked on into the apple orchard, and through its pleasant lights and shadows (it seemed like enchanted ground to Jack, with her beside him), until they came to a little brook on the other side, that went lispings and bubbling over its pebbly bed.

There on the grassy bank they sat down ; and, with the mellow sunshine falling aslant upon them through the trees, the soft winds blowing over them, the brook laughing at their feet, and the social robins chirping their quiet afternoon songs in the boughs above, Annie, who had brought a book with her, gave Jack a lesson in reading.

And what a lesson it was ! Ever afterwards old John Bunyan's story (the book from which he read) was associated in Jack's mind with tender green leaves and young clover, running water, singing birds and sweet breezes, and the pleasant voice and smile of Annie Felton.

The lesson over, she said she would take a little walk alone, and call on old Aunt Patsy, of whom he

had told her as they came through the orchard ; and, crossing the brook on a pair of natural stepping-stones, she went her way, through Squire Peternot's fields, towards the old woman's house. Jack watched the red scarf until it vanished, then walked back pensively under the orchard trees, wondering at the strange new life of thought and feeling which had opened to him that memorable day.

As he approached the house, Lion, whom he had left at his dinner, came running to meet him, followed more slowly by Moses.

"Where's Annie?" Moses asked, while yet at a distance. "That's interesting!" he remarked, discontentedly, when told where she had gone. "She knew the fellows would be here to have a sing."

"It's more her than the singing they care for," said Phin, coming after Moses. "They never used to flock to our house so, Sunday afternoons, till she took the deestricht school. Now they've all gone to psa'm-singing, — even Don Curtis, such a heathen as he is!"

"Flies are perty sure to find out where the molasses-mug is," observed Mr. Pipkin, passing just then with his milk-pails. "Yender's one o' the swarm, that comes three mild, or more, to git a sip on 't."

"He?" said Moses, watching a buggy coming up the road. "That's Syd Chatford; he's my cousin."

"He never thought so much o' bein' your cousin till lately," Mr. Pipkin replied. "He's growed terrible affectionate towards his Peach Hill relations sence the summer school opened."

"Did n't she live here before?" Jack inquired of Phineas.

"No, nor she don't live here now. Her home's over in Raggy," said Phin, meaning *Riga*, a township of that region. "She teaches in our deestrick," — the towns are divided into school-districts, — "and boards around, but comes here every Saturday and stops over till Monday. Hello! Syd's driving the colt!"

The boys hastened to meet their cousin, and Moses opened the gate for him to drive into the yard.

"How does he go, Syd?" Phin inquired.

"O, fust-rate," said Syd, alighting. "True as a die!"

"Lathers a little," observed Moses.

"Warm day," replied Syd. "'Sides, I've come a perty good jog. Folks all well?"

"All that's to home," said Phin, maliciously. "Annie, she's away."

"You don't say! Gone hum, over to Raggy?" Syd inquired, with a curiously dashed and disappointed expression. "I — I guess you need n't put out my horse, Moses; I did n't come calc'ulating to make much of a stop to-day; thought I'd try the colt. S'pose the' won't be much of a sing, if she ain't here."

"O, she'll be here in an hour or so," said the grinning Phineas; "she's only gone to make a little call."

"O, hain't gone to Raggy? I don't mind, Mose,

since you 've begun to untackle ; s'pose he 'll stand better out of the fills, — colt, so."

Just then Bill Burbank and his faithful follower, Don Curtis, came lounging into the yard. They nodded at Syd, and immediately began to inspect the colt with great interest. They walked about him, turning their quids and squinting ; Don stroked his ankles, and made him lift a foot, while Burbank looked into his mouth.

"Four year old this spring," observed Burbank, stepping back as if satisfied.

"Good leg," commented Don Curtis. "I'd like to see him move."

"O, he can move !" cried the owner, laughing.

"There 's go in him ; I see that," said Burbank, with his head on one side. "I've got a beast I'd like to show ye ; should n't wonder if we could make a swap."

Syd's only reply to this insinuating suggestion was an incredulous laugh, — for he knew too well Burbank's horse-trading habits to care to have any words with him on so dangerous a subject.

"You 'll find a halter under the seat, Mose," said he, pulling off his driving-gloves as he turned to go into the house.

"Stiff little chap," said Burbank, following him with his eye.

"Straight as a cob !" said Don Curtis. "Don't he carry his head high, though, for such a little fellow ? Treats you like a servant, Mose."

"That 's his way; Syd always felt pretty big," said Moses.

"After the schoolma'am?" queried Burbank.

"Well, the same as the rest of ye," said Moses, laughing, as he led the horse to the barn.

Miss Felton had left with Jack the book which he had been reading; and which he now started to carry into the house. As he was going through the kitchen he heard Syd saying to Phin in the next room, "Hello, there! I must see what you' doin' with that hat o' mine! By jolly, I had a hat stole last night."

Jack, who was just taking the book into the room, drew back as if he had received a shot.

"How 'd it happen?" said Phin.

"Choir met in our school-house; hung our hats in the entry as usual; looked for mine when I started to go home, and, by jolly! 't was missing. Chip hat, — did n't care anything about it; tied my handkerchief over my head; but I don't believe in the principle, — hookin' things that way! — I'd like to ketch the scamp!"

Jack withdrew, in sudden consternation, and walked softly out of the house. His first impulse was to call Lion, and depart without stopping to take leave. Not that Syd's threat had any terrors for him. But he felt that the detection of his fault, which seemed inevitable, — since the stolen hat was hanging on the very row of pegs in the entry where Phin was at that moment placing his cousin's black beaver, — would

ruin his prospects in that house and sink him forever in the estimation of Mrs. Chatford and her niece.

Scarcely, however, had he left the kitchen when a better thought came to him. He remembered that Miss Felton had said, "If you have any trouble, come and tell me; I'll be your friend." And he formed a sudden resolution.

"I'll go and meet her, and tell her everything!"

He went through the orchard, where he had lately been so happy, crossed the brook,—Lion bounding over after him,—and, passing a meadow beyond, came in sight of Aunt Patsy's house. There he sat down by a wall which separated the meadow from the pasture beyond, and anxiously waited for Annie to appear.

While in that position he was startled by a sound of footsteps coming rapidly behind him, and, looking round, saw a dapper little man walking very fast, straight towards him. It was Syd Chatford.

"He's after me!" thought Jack, laying a hand on Lion's neck. "Never mind; I may as well have it over, and done with it."

He was preparing to meet the expected charge in a brave and honest way, when, to his astonishment, young Syd, on seeing him, turned aside a little from his straight course, leaped the wall a few yards off, and continued his walk, rapidly as before, in the direction of Aunt Patsy's house.

"He's after *her*!" thought Jack; "Phin must have told him where she was. That knocks me! for

if they come back together, I can't speak a word to her, of course. My luck!" he added, bitterly.

He watched until he saw the dapper form disappear among the lilac and quince bushes about Aunt Patsy's house, and reappear not long after in company with a fair young form wearing a red scarf. He turned away, muttering dark resolves; but just then something occurred so startling that it drove instantly all thoughts of his own ill-luck out of his mind.

What that something was we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNWELCOME INTERRUPTION.

WHEN Mr. Syd Chatford reached Aunt Patsy's house he found the door ajar, and, as he was about to knock, saw a scene within which made him pause.

There, in the middle of the room, sat Aunt Patsy in a low-backed chair, while behind it, leaning over and combing the old gray head, stood Annie Felton. The rays of the setting sun shone into the wretched apartment, and brought out in strong relief of color the strange contrast between all the misery it contained, and the youth and freshness of the bright young girl who seemed to have strayed into it from another world. Syd was not a very sentimental young gentleman, yet something struck deeply into his heart as he stood gazing at this picture of beautiful girlhood and poverty-stricken age.

"O you blessed child!" the old woman was saying. "You do my body and soul good! O, you warm my poor old heart, that's been like a frozen clod so long! I hain't had a kind hand touch my forehead and hair for ten years, — for ten years!" she repeated, with plaintive emphasis. "It's a cross, wrinkled forehead now, and my old gray hair makes me look like a fright; but, child, it was n't always so. I was a



han'some gal,—proud and han'some. I ain't old, neither,—not half so old as I look; I'm only fifty-seven. It seems sometimes not much longer ago than yesterday that life was just as bright to me as it is to you, dear,—the futur' all rose-color,—and now look at me!—look at me!" and she ended with a groan.

"The future may be bright to you still," said Annie, — "why not? It is partly your own fault that you have no friends, is n't it? You have been too proud, maybe."

"Yes, yes. I've been proud and obstinate enough, Lord knows! It begun when my fust husband was living. He was a good man, — good to me, at least, but there come trouble, — I can't deny but there was some cause for suspicions agin him, — and neighbors tried to git red of him. Then, after he died, they tried to git red of me. Squire Peternot wanted my land; and folks declared bad characters used to come and visit me. 'Bad company's better'n none,' says I; and I defied 'em. I was all spunk in them days, — but, O dear, O dear! It's too late now to alter the past, and as for the futur', — I see no rest for me but the grave."

"And is there nothing beyond the grave?" said Annie, very softly.

"I don't know!" replied Aunt Patsy. "My fust husband used to argue, — 'a dog dies, and where is he? a man dies, and where is he?' He unsettled my belief. I've been adrift, — I've been in the dark ever sence."

"Light will come to you again," said Annie, cheeringly. "But you must get out of your old, unnatural way of living. It is dreadful to be so lonely, and to have your heart so set against the world! Come, I'll be your friend; I'll visit you often, and send you other friends, if you will open your heart to them."

"My heart is hard, — it's rock to them that come

to spite and fight me!" said the old woman, grimly. "But" — her voice and expression softened — "it opens easy enough to one that has the key to 't. What a light hand you have! what a soft touch! Oh!" — with a deep breath, — "it goes to my very soul! And I do believe it limbers my joints. But there! don't spend your strength working over me any more. I ain't wuth it."

"O yes, you are, mother!" cried Annie. "And now that I've combed your head I am going to set your room to rights."

"No, no, child! It needs it enough, but it ain't fitting that *you* should touch it."

Syd, who was of the old woman's opinion, thought it time to knock.

"For massy sakes! who can that be?" said Aunt Patsy. "It never rains but it pours. I hain't had so much company for six months as I've had to-day."

"How d'e do! how 's yer health?" said pompous little Syd, bowing and shaking hands with Annie, who went to the door. "They 're waiting for ye over to the house, — going to have a sing, I believe; — and Aunt Marshy" (meaning Mrs. Chatford, whose given name was Marcia) "sent me over" (here he stretched the truth a little) "to tell ye."

"Please say that I will come very soon," replied Annie. But that did not suit Syd's views.

"Can't do nothing 'thout you, ye know," he said. "They 'll be disapp'inted, if I go back alone."

"I suppose I must go, then," said Annie; and she

returned to take leave of Aunt Patsy. The old woman kissed her hand with tears, and entreated her to come again. With glistening eyes Annie promised; and, throwing once more the red scarf over her neck, she set out to accompany her cousins' cousin.

"Frightful place!" said Syd, as they turned their backs upon it; "horrid old creature!—how could you bear to stay in her house?"

"I can't say that either she or her house was very attractive to me," said Annie, with eyes still moist and lip still a-tremble. "Yet I would n't have missed going there for anything!"

"I understand," replied Syd, — "felt it your duty; I admire the motive. No doubt you done her good."

"I hope I — did — her good," said Annie, dwelling ever so slightly on the little word between dashes, — just enough to show him the weak point in his grammar. "But I know I've done myself good by going to see her. It is n't well to take life always so lightly as we do. We don't think enough of others; we don't do enough for others." And she brushed away a tear, as she thought of poor old Aunt Patsy left alone in her misery.

Now it must be told that proud Syd Chatford had, like humble Jack Hazard, an especial reason for wishing to walk home with Annie Felton, — though a very different reason. He too had something private and particular to say to her.

"It's a duty to do — hem — what we can — for the poor and needy. But it's a pleasure — a delight —

to — to sacrifice ourselves even — for those — at least for the one — we love. Annie! if I could show my devotion to you — give my life, if necessary —”

But just here Squire Peternot's black bull came running furiously behind the sauntering pair, his eye attracted and his rage inflamed by Annie's red scarf.

“By jolly!” exclaimed Syd, looking round, on hearing the sudden jar of hoofs. Annie gave a shriek, and both fled for their lives. Self-sacrifice for the sake of the loved one is beautiful in the abstract, but reduced to a reality, — with terrible horns and short, depressed neck visible just behind you, — it is something from which even a more ardent lover than Syd might beg respectfully to be excused.

Not that our modern knight, in dapper broadcloth and sleek beaver hat, deserted his lady. When he found that he was swifter of foot than she, — or rather longer-breathed, for she was a match for him at the start, — he grasped her arm and strove manfully to help her over the ground. But there was no fence within ten rods, and it is doubtful whether the animal in his rage would not have overleaped the highest bounds of the pasture. Ah, if Annie had only bethought herself of the cause of his excitement, and flung off the scarf! But it was securely pinned on, with only the loose ends fluttering in the wind, as if the more to enrage the wild beast plunging nearer and nearer, and now close at hand.

And this is the incident which, as I said, drove all thoughts of his own ill-luck out of Jack's mind.

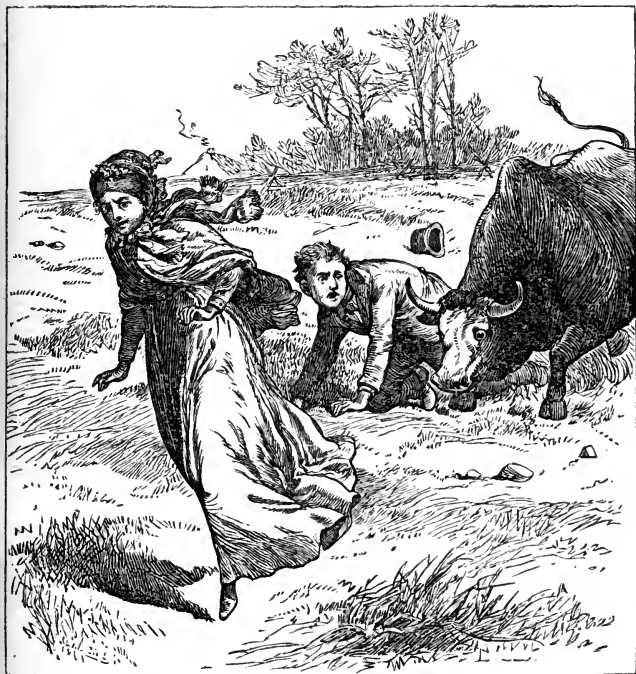
CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATTLE.

SEEING escape for both impossible, Syd Chatford formed an heroic resolution. Adjuring Annie with his spent breath to *run — run !* he suddenly stopped, turned, and faced the bull.

For an instant there was something sublime, as well as ludicrous, in the situation. He had left his hat some rods behind, and the bull had trampled it. His hair was in disorder, flying electrically all over his head. His face pale, his eyes wild, his straight form erect, he looked like a terrified exclamation-point set to stop the career of that tremendous beast.

Syd's trembling hands reached instinctively to grasp the horns even then lowered to toss him. The next moment he was on his hands and knees, and the terrible brute was rushing past him. How he came in that position he never well knew, the thing that happened to him was so frightfully sudden. But he always averred (and I remember hearing him many times tell the story) that he certainly succeeded in grasping one horn, and thus saved himself from being gored. His formidable foe, having flung him aside, did not stop to toss him, but resumed his pursuit of the scarf; when the overturned knight, recovering from the shock of the combat just in time to see a



long black tail brandished before his eyes, seized it, and sprang to his feet.

Annie had gained a little time through the delay occasioned by this brief encounter; but now, with an amazing bellow, the beast bounded towards her again, with the undaunted Syd in tow, holding by that short cable, pulling backwards with all his

might, but in vain, — his hair and heels and coat-tails flying behind him, while he gasped out frantically, as if it had been a horse running away with him, "Whoa ! whoa ! whoa !"

Suddenly he stumbled, and, falling, lost his hold of the tail. Then the bull, freed from all encumbrance, flew with head down and horns advanced to transfix the unfortunate girl. Annie could almost have felt his hot breath upon her, when, with a faint scream, breath and strength failing, she sank to the ground.

The fall was timely ; the beast's momentum being such that his head and fore-feet passed completely over her before he was able to stop. Then he recoiled, and brought his head down so close to her face that about all she could see of it, for a single moment of helpless, hopeless horror, was one eye, which looked as big as a saucer. He was feeling for her with his horns, and bellowing with rage ; and there she lay at his mercy ; Syd was still at a distance, and would have been powerless to save her had he been on the spot ; — when a fresh actor rushed upon the scene.

He approached so swiftly and noiselessly that Annie had not perceived him ; and the first she knew of his presence was when another black object dashed over her head at the head of the bull, with a fierce snarl seized his ear, and began to shake and tear it. The bull thereupon left the lady and rushed upon the dog.

Lion — for it was he — retreated, still facing the

foe, snapping at lip or dewlap or nose, as those points were exposed to him, and often seizing and holding on while the bull lunged and stamped and flung him from side to side.

"Sick! bite 'em! good fellow!" shouted Jack, arriving upon the field of battle; and he began to belabor the bull's back and sides with a club. "Shake him! tear him! good dog!"

By this time Syd had lifted Annie to her feet, and was helping her from the field. Singularly enough, she had scarcely been hurt at all. She was at first almost too weak to stand; but, encouraged by her companion, she exerted herself, and reached the wall.

And now still another actor appeared. This was no other than the owner of the bull, — Squire Peter-not himself.

"Ho, there! stop that! hullo!" he called out, urging his stiff joints into a run, and flourishing his cane. "You young vagabond!" for as he came up he recognized boy and dog, "what are ye 'bout here?"

Perceiving the cane about to descend upon his head, Jack dodged, and prepared to defend himself.

"Scamp!" said the squire, trembling with excitement, — "you young villain, you! — could n't you find any other mischief, Sunday artemnoon, but you must — Take your dog off, or I'll kill him!"

And the angry old man aimed a blow at Lion. As the fight was still going on, and the combatants were both in lively motion, the cane, missing its mark, alighted on the bull's nose.

"Come here, Lion! here!" said Jack, pulling his dog off; while the bull, glad to be rid of him, ran to meet a wondering herd of cattle coming to witness the combat. "That your bull, mister?"

"Yes, it's my bull! and I'll have ye up for beatin' and settin' your dog on to him, sure's you're born! Come along with me!" And the long-armed squire reached to grasp the boy's shoulder.

"What'll I come along with you fer?" cried Jack. "Jest you wait and hear why—"

"I don't care to listen to any of your lies," said the squire. "I made up my mind about you last night, when you come to my door with that dog, and told me such a tissue of falsehoods. Where did ye steal them clo'es? — If I can't take ye, I'll send somebody that can!"

"For what, sir?" inquired a sharp, decided voice; and Jack, turning, saw Syd Chatford approaching.

"For abusin' my creetur', him and his dog," said the squire.

"Perhaps you're not aware what your creetur' was about," replied Syd, his straight form and somewhat pompous manners making up in a degree for his small stature, as he confronted the grim, gaunt squire. "He was on the point of tossing that young lady yonder, — Miss Annie Felton, sir! — a hair of whose head is worth more than all the cattle that could stand on your farm!"

"Pooh! pooh!" said the squire, contemptuously.

"Yes, sir!" Syd went on. "He had chased her

from beyond where you see my hat on the ground back there. Nothing under Heaven stopped him but this dog. If it had n't been for him and the boy, her blood, sir, would have been on your hands !”

“On my hands ? you impudent puppy !” said the squire.

“Yes, sir,—for letting such a beast run loose. The truth is the truth, sir, whether I'm an impudent puppy or not.”

“It's my own field, and what business has any person to cross it ? Though if 't was a habit of an animal o' mine to run at people, of course,” said the squire, becoming a trifle more reasonable, “I should take care on 'em. But I never in my life knowed one to do sich a thing. What's that red concern on the ground ?”

It was Annie's scarf, which had been torn off when she was under the animal's feet.

“That's the trouble ! Did n't she know no better 'n that ? To wear a flamin' red jigger in a field where cattle are ! My creetur's are peaceable as any man's. I should regret to know she got hurt,—I believe she's an estimable young woman,—but don't talk about her blood bein' on my hands, and one of her hairs bein' more val'able than all the live stock that could be got on to two hundred and sixty acres of land ! That's rank nonsense. And as for you,” — Squire Peternot shook his cane at Jack, — “don't let me ketch you on my premises agin, if you don't want to git into diffikilty.”

And the old man strode angrily away.

CHAPTER XX.

HOME.

SYD went back for his hat, while the squire was talking; and he now returned with it, shaping and brushing it by the way.

"No harm;—little I care for the hat! Whose boy are ye? where do ye live?" Syd inquired.

"I ain't nobody's boy, and I don't live nowheres," replied the ungrammatical Jack.

Syd picked up the scarf. "I never saw a finer dog! Will you sell him? I'll give ye five dollars for him."

"I guess I don't want to part with him," said Jack, proud and happy.

"I'll give ye ten,—by jolly, I'll give ye fifteen dollars!" said the enthusiastic Syd.

Although so much money seemed a fortune to poor Jack, and he opened his eyes wide at the magnificent offer, still he pulled the loose hide on Lion's neck affectionately, and said again "he guessed he did n't want to sell."

"I don't blame ye," said Syd. "Though, if you should change your mind, or be obliged to part with him, I don't know but I'll say twenty. Miss Felton, allow me to introduce you to the hero of the day."

Lion was none of your surly, dignified dogs, that receive a caress with a growl. Syd's pats gave him pleasure (he seemed to know he deserved them); and now every part of his body, from tongue to tail, seemed alive with delight, as Annie, sitting on the grass by the wall, threw her arms about him.

"O you noble creature!" she said, with tears and smiles, embracing and patting him, "you don't know what you saved me from!"

"Yes, he does!" said Jack, exultantly.

"And you, and you," she turned from Jack to Syd, — "I would thank both of you, if I had any words. That miserable scarf! I know now what it was that excited the brute. Your hat has suffered, Sydney, — I am sorry to see."

"Yes. I have poor luck with hats lately. Had one stole last evening, by jolly! Between thieves and mad bulls I shall have to go bareheaded soon."

A shadow swept over Jack's heart, all sunshine before. He shrank back, so that his guilty face might not be seen, while Syd helped Annie over the wall. They then returned slowly towards the house, she leaning on Syd's arm, while Jack walked behind in gloomy silence with his dog.

"Why did n't I speak up, and say, 'T was me that took your hat, mister'?" thought the culprit. "Then was my time. He'd forgive me, if I told him all about it, I know. But I can't tell him now. A good fellow, I guess. Twenty dollars! Lion! old Lion! you don't know what a fortin I've flung away, ruth-

er 'n part with you !” Lion looked as if he did know, though.

The neighbors who had dropped in “to have a sing” were assembled with the family in the great square parlor, and all were beginning seriously to wonder what had become of Miss Felton, when Phin, hovering about the door, cried out, “Here she comes now ! here they all come !” and in walked majestic little Syd, accompanied by the young lady, Jack, and his dog.

Jack was inclined to slink away, but Annie insisted on his showing her four-footed protector to the family ; and the boy was by no means averse to seeing Lion made the hero of the occasion. Syd told the story of her perilous adventure and wonderful rescue ; and you may be sure it created an immense sensation in that usually quiet parlor. Everybody congratulated her ; everybody praised Lion, and had something to say to Lion’s owner ; all which made Jack glow again with happiness, while it filled the heart of Phineas with envy.

“Give me yer hand, Bub !” said a young fellow, who had come in with his sister to join in the evening’s singing. “You’ve seen me before ?”

“I guess I have !” answered Jack, — “by the light of a tin lantern ; and ye had a gun in yer hand.”

“I took a notion to your dog then,” said Ab, — for it was the elder of the Welby boys.

“Yes, more 'n ye did to me,” Jack replied.

“Mabby so. I did n’t know you. I’d like to buy that dog.”

"I'll take that dog off your hands, boy, — if you'll name a fair price," said Don Curtis.

"If he sells to anybody, he sells to me," remarked Syd Chatford, stiffly.

"That dog ain't going out of this family, now I tell ye!" cried Phineas. "I spoke for him first!"

If Jack had seen fit to put up his friend at auction, there is no telling what bids might not have been made for him. But Mr. Pipkin, coming in just then from his milking, with a ludicrously puckered and solemn countenance, reminded the young men that it was Sunday, and not a fitting time for dog-trades; and Deacon Chatford said, "I guess the boy and his dog will stay with us till to-morrow, — won't he, mother? — then you fellows can talk with him."

Mrs. Chatford said with emotion, as she turned away from her niece, "Certainly, he will stay with us!"

"I don't see where you're goin' to find a place for him to sleep," grumbled Mr. Pipkin. "There's reason in all things, but —"

"Mr. Pipkin's is a good wide bed," remarked Miss Wansey.

"Miss Wansey," began Mr. Pipkin, indignantly, "I've nothin' to —"

But Mrs. Chatford hastened to settle the matter and save unpleasant words. "Come with me, my boy. I'll find a place for you without troubling anybody. Let your dog come too, if he wants to."

She led the way to an unfinished garret room, under

the opposite slope of the low roof from the boys' chamber. "It looks rough," said she, "but it is clean; and here is a nice bed for you. This will be your room as long as you stay with us. And, O my son!" she added, with tearful earnestness, taking his hand, "if you *should* happen to stay a good while, I hope — I am sure — you will try to do well! You won't mind the rough rafters, will you? They are low; don't hit your head against 'em. Come down and hear the singing when you feel like it."

Before Jack could say a word to thank her she was gone. He stood, and looked around him. Bare and low and unfinished as was the chamber, it was lovely to him; it was his own, it was home; and he shed tears of joy as he shut the door, and sat down on the bed.

"Old boy!" he said, taking Lion betwixt his knees, "I've refused a fortin fer ye, but you're a fortin in yourself!" For he felt that it was the dog's conduct in the field which had secured for them these comfortable quarters.

Hearing a noise outside of the unplastered partition which separated his room from the rest of the garret, he looked and saw a pair of eyes between the laths. He stepped and opened the door, and there stood Phin.

"Ain't ye going down to hear the singing?" said that young gentleman, with one of his insincere smiles. "Come! we can stay in the entry, if ye don't want to go into the room."

Jack assented. Half-way down the stairs Phin

turned and looked back at him, — and now the smile had developed to a grin, as he said, — “I s’pose ye felt pretty big, did n’t ye? when everybody was praising your dog; though I don’t see why ye should, for it was n’t for anything *you* had done, as I see.”

Jack made no reply, but went and sat on the doorstep. There he could hear the singing, and see the pale face of Miss Felton, whose voice, when at length it joined with the others, sounded so sweet, with just a faint tremor of her recent agitation in it, that it thrilled him to those depths of the heart where some pure, some holy affection lies hidden, even in the hardened sinner’s breast. Jack, though a sinner of no little experience for his years, was not hardened; his heart, under the influence of that face and that voice, and of all the kindness that had been shown him that afternoon, was soft as wax.

“Say! what ye crying for!” said Phin, poking him in the ribs. “I don’t see anything to blubber at.”

The long twilight fading, candles were carried into the parlor. Soon after Jack went softly around to the other entry, took from its peg the stolen hat, put it on, and walked out under the pale and misty stars. Nobody following or seeming to notice him, he wandered about awhile in the yard, and at last returned to the house. He was bareheaded, and his face was radiant. As he had chuckled the night before at the thought of the owner’s perplexity when he should go to look for his hat, so he now once more laughed secretly, but with a far deeper and purer satisfaction.

"Hullo!" said Phin, meeting him at the kitchen door. "I've been looking for you. Le's go and make a bed for the dog. Where's your hat?"

"I'll get it," said Jack, taking down the one Mrs. Chatford had given him.

Phin lighted a lantern; and Lion was soon provided with a bed of clean straw in a kennel made out of a hencoop, and stationed beside the barn door.

Then in a little while Jack, his heart filled with a strange, sweet quiet, which, if not happiness, was something better, crept into his own bed, and fell asleep to the sound of the singing in the room below.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THE FARM.



HE next morning Jack began to make himself useful about the house and on the farm. Everything appeared fresh and beautiful to him, in the lovely summer weather. The early sunshine, the trees in their tender foliage, the broods of young chickens about the barn-yard, the singing birds, the cows lowing to be milked, even the pigs squealing for their breakfast,—all was picture to his eye and music to his ear; for he saw with the vision of happy youth, and hope was singing in his soul.

In learning and in helping, how eager he was! But one thing marred his enjoyment. He had too many masters. Moses told him to do one thing, Mr. Pipkin another, and Miss Wansey a third, all in a minute; and Phin was in his glory with somebody to order about.

After breakfast there were clothes to pound, for it was washing-day. This was ordinarily Phin's task, and a task he hated ; he was accordingly glad enough to shirk it off on Jack.

"I've got to ride horse to plough out corn ; you must help the women-folks to-day," he said, with the air of a landed proprietor.

"Jack, come and turn the grin'stun for me to grind down my hoe a leetle," said Mr. Pipkin.

"You don't do any such thing, Jack !" said Miss Wansey. "I want you to fetch in some water."

"Heavens an' airth !" exclaimed Mr. Pipkin. "Who's master o' this house, I'd like to know ? Come with me, Jack, and don't ye mind her tongue a mite ; I don't," said Mr. Pipkin. "I've nothin' to say to her whatever ! Bring some water for the stun."

"Come here, Jack !" just then Moses called from the barn.

"Jack, Jack, Jack !" said Mr. Chatford, laughing, as he came out of the kitchen ; "run to the top of the house ! go to the cellar ! jump over the barn ! Why don't you mind, Jack ?"

"I don't know which to mind first," replied Jack. "If there was five or six of me, I might obey orders all round ; but being only myself, I'm bothered ! Who shall I mind, anyhow ?"

"Mind me," said the deacon. "Pay no attention to anybody else to-day, unless I tell you to. For the next hour or so I give you over to Miss Wansey ;

when she is through with you, come out into the lot, and I 'll tell you what to do next."

"Jack," said Miss Wansey, triumphantly, — while Mr. Pipkin walked off in humble silence, — "take that pail, go to the rain-trough, and fetch in water enough to fill this tub."

The "rain-trough" — an immense trough hewed out of a log cut from one of the largest forest trees — stood behind the house, where it received the water from the eaves. This was a very common substitute for a cistern in those days, and was a capital thing for boys to sail their tiny ships in, and for breeding mosquitoes. Jack found a shingle schooner with paper sails adrift in the tub, and two canal-boats, whittled out of pine, with thread for tow-lines, made fast to pins stuck into the edge of the trough for "snubbing-posts." As he was about to dip in his pail, regardless of the interests of commerce on those waters, Phin came running towards him from the woodshed, where he had been dressing his wood-chuck-skin.

"Don't swamp my schooner! look out for my packets!" cried that enterprising navigator. "See here a minute, Jack! Le's play these are our boats, and run opposition. Mine 's the Redbird. Sometimes we 'll be friends, and I 'll drop my tow-line for your boat to pass over one way, and you 'll drop yours for my boat, going t' other way; then we 'll race, and cut each other's tow-lines, — for that 's the way they do on the canal. I 'm Cap'n Bromley, and

my boat can beat any boat you can bring on ! Come, you know how."

Jack rather thought he did, and at another time he would have been pleased to enact on that small stage some of the scenes with which he had long been only too familiar. He had never aspired to the dignity of a packet-horse driver ; but everybody in that region, on or off the canal, knew Captain Bromley and his famous Redbird in those days ; and perhaps Jack could have shown a few tricks common to boatmen, with which Phin, being only an amateur, was unacquainted. For a moment a vision of his old, rude way of life swept before his eyes, and his new life seemed a dream ; then, remembering that he was to obey only Miss Wansey's orders that morning, he drew out his pail of water, — making great waves that caused Phin's little fleet to rock and pitch, — and hastened with it into the house.

The tub filled, Jack brought in from the woodshed the great, strong "pounding-barrel," — an indispensable auxiliary of the wash-tub and rubbing-board, in the Chatford household. Jack hardly knew what he was undertaking when he set out, under Miss Wansey's directions, to go through with the preliminary process of cleansing the family linen. The "pounder" consisted of a round, straight stick, like a broom-handle, inserted in a block perforated with holes for letting the suds gush out through the sides from a cavity in the centre. The suds were hot, and every time Jack let the pounder fall upon the soaking mass of clothes in

the bottom of the barrel, the stifling steam filled his nostrils and the spatters flew into his face, sometimes into his mouth. Then Miss Wansey, as he soon learned, had a washing-day spirit which she put on with her old gown; a fury of work seemed to possess her; she pervaded the kitchen like a storm. Good Mrs. Chatford helped a little, but pleased Miss Wansey best by keeping out of her way.

Jack did not wonder that Phin hated the pounding-barrel, and he was rejoiced when Miss Wansey told him he could go to the field. She had given him his orders in language so much like scolding that he feared he had not pleased her at all, and was quite surprised when she said to him at parting, "There, Jack Hazard! I'd give more for you one half-hour over a pounding-barrel than for Phin Chatford all day!"

He hurried to the field, where he saw at a distance Phin riding Old Maje, and Mr. Chatford following, holding a plough, between the rows of young corn. Near by were Moses and Mr. Pipkin, shaping the freshly turned earth into hills about the young blades, and cutting out the weeds and grass.

"Jest in time," said Mr. Pipkin, looking up from his stooping shoulders, and showing his ivory over the hill he was hoeing. "Ketch up that hoe in the corner of the fence there, and pitch in on this next row."

"Go to the well first, Jack, and bring a jug of water," said Moses.

What Jack did was to wait for Mr. Chatford, coming

back behind the horse and plough between the rows. The horse stopped in a corner of the zigzag rail-fence, and while the deacon was pulling the plough around, and lifting it over the last hills, Jack inquired what he was to do next. "One says, 'Take the hoe'; t' other says, 'Go for a jug of water.'"

"And I tell you not to mind a word they say," replied the deacon, laughing. "Phineas will go for water while the horse is resting, and I shall want to use the hoe myself. Send your dog to the house, and come with me."

Jack followed Mr. Chatford to the edge of a green field on the other side of the lane.

"Do you know what this is growing here?"

"Wheat, ain't it?"

"Yes. And do you know what this is?" said the deacon, pulling up a weed.

"I've heard that called red-root," Jack replied.

"And a pesky mean root it is," said Mr. Chatford, pulling up another. "It's coming so thick in all our wheat about here that the only way to get rid of it, as I see, is to pull it out. That's what I want you to do. Get right down to it, take a strip two or three paces broad, through the piece, and pull out every bit you see. Do this till I tell you to do something else. And, as I said, don't mind what anybody else tells you."

Jack thought it easy work at first, but he was unused to stooping, and it was not long before he began to think it would be nice to stand up a little while at

a pounding-barrel. He found himself rather lonely, moreover, and was sorry he could not have kept Lion with him. He persevered, however, with a stout heart, and went through and through the wheat-lot, seeing nobody, and thinking his own solitary thoughts, until once, when he was near the edge of the field farthest from the lane, he heard a stone rattle from the wall. He looked up, but looked down again in an instant, while his heart made a sudden leap in his throat.

He had seen a man stepping over the wall into the wheat-lot, not more than three rods off. It was old Berrick.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW JACK PULLED THE RED-ROOT.

THE captain of the scow had crossed the Peternot farm from the direction of Aunt Patsy's house; and he had jumped down from the wall without seeing the face turned up at him for an instant under the slouching hat-brim. Then, noticing the boy at work there, — for little Jack was very industriously pulling up something, though whether it was wheat or red-root he could n't have stated under oath, — big Jack stopped and watched him.

The runaway trembled, undecided which of three things he should do, — jump up and run for his life; keep quietly at his work, with his head down, relying upon his strange clothes to disguise him; or boldly face his step-father. He at first regretted that Lion was not with him, but later he was glad, for the presence of the dog would certainly have betrayed him.

Captain Jack watched for a few moments the boy on hand and knee in the wheat, groping for weeds, then called out, coaxingly, — "Hullo, Bub!"

Jack lifted his head a little way, but not far enough to expose his face.

"Ye want a job?" said Berrick.

Slowly the lifted head was shaken, and lowered

again ; and the industrious Jack went on with his weeding. Captain Berrick took a step towards him.

“ Say, Bub ! would ye like to go on the canal ? ”

Jack gave another emphatic shake, with his head down and his hand still busy.



“ I ’m looking for a driver. Give ye good wages ; treat ye well, besides. What do ye say ? ”

Jack said nothing, but again the hat-brim re-

volved with a vigorous shake before his step-father's eyes.

"Ye hain't seen a boy an' dog pass this way, have ye?" then said Berrick. "Boy 'bout your size, only raggeder. Dog kind o' Newfoundland. Yesterday or this mornin'. Hey, Bub?"

Of course Jack had not seen such a boy, and his head made such haste to say so that the joints in his neck snapped, while a cold perspiration broke out all over his body.

"Be ye a fool?" bawled out Captain Jack, losing patience. "Hain't ye got no tongue?"

Another shake; whereupon Berrick dropped altogether his coaxing tone, and, with some characteristic rough words, — vowing that the boy was too stupid for *his* business anyhow, and advising him to stick to his weeds, for he was good for nothing else, — turned and walked off across the wheat-lot.

This fear passed, another possessed the lad, as he peeped from under his hat and saw Captain Jack vanish over a fence in the direction of the charcoal-burners' camp. "If he talks with them, they 'll tell him, and he 'll be back here after me!" he thought. Immediately he left his work, ran to the fence over which Berrick had disappeared, and to his great joy saw him pass around the edge of the woods in which the coal-pit was smoking. Then, with nerves still in a tremor, but with a glad and thankful heart, he ran back to his task.

There he was, pulling red-root and not wheat,

when he heard a horn blow, far away over the orchard, and, looking up at the sun, thought it must be dinner-time. Then he saw Phin riding homeward on Old Maje, along the lane, followed by his father. Then Mr. Pipkin came and looked over the lane fence, and shouted at Jack and beckoned. Then all went out of sight in the direction of the barn; and Jack said to himself, "It *is* dinner! and I'm hungry as a bear." Still he kept at work.

Not long after he heard a voice in the direction of the orchard; and there was Moses shouting and beckoning. Moses had been sent by his mother to call Jack, who, she feared, had not heard, or understood; Mr. Pipkin's previous signal. Jack merely looked up, and continued at work.

Meanwhile the dinner went on without him; and it was half over, when Mrs. Chatford said, "Why! where can that boy be? Did n't you call him, Moses?"

"I called as loud as I could," said Moses, "and I know he heard me."

"I called him as good and fair as ever a boy was called to dinner," said Mr. Pipkin; "an' I thought he was comin'. I never before knowed a boy that wanted to be called more 'n two times to his meals."

"If he don't know enough to come, let him stay away," remarked Master Phineas.

"Eh? what?" spoke up the deacon, who had been in one of his absent-minded moods up to this moment. "Why, where — where 's Jack?" And,

being told, he said, "I declare ! is it possible ? I do believe it 's my fault, after all !"

"How your fault, father ?" Mrs. Chatford inquired.

"Sure as the world !" said the deacon, shoving back his chair. "I told him not to mind a word anybody said to him to-day, except me. And I told him to pull red-root till I ordered him to do something else. He might have known enough, though, to come to dinner. I 'm provoked with the fellow !"

And yet the good deacon was pleased to have found a lad capable of obeying orders so strictly, "on an empty stomach, too," as he said. He himself now left his dinner unfinished, and walked through the orchard to call Jack, who, tired and hungry, needed no other summons.

"Hey, boy ?" said Mr. Chatford, as Jack, swift of foot, overtook him in the orchard ; "you might have come to dinner, when called, you know."

"I thought I might," said Jack ; "but I was n't sure, — you had told me —"

"Yes, yes ! it is all right," said the deacon, patting his shoulder. "I like you the better for taking me at my word, and sticking to it. But I 'm a terrible forgetful man sometimes, and you must n't always count on my remembering what I 've said. I like to see a boy mind, without shirking and arguing ; but 'there 's reason in all things,' as Pippy says."

So saying he took Jack into dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JACK VISITS "THE BASIN."

JACK pulled red-root all the afternoon ; and it is quite safe to infer that he did not wait to be summoned very many times to supper.

"Well, my boy," Mr. Chatford said to him at the table, "how do you like the job?"

"I 'm glad of something to do," replied Jack, with a queer smile in one corner of his mouth.

"But you ain't over and above delighted with that particular job?"

Jack did not profess to be in raptures over it ; it was "kind o' lonesome," he said, and "back-achey."

"And I guess by this time," remarked the hired man, "he 's jest about ready to go back on to the canal ; sorry he learnt the trade, as the feller said arter he 'd blowed the blacksmith's bellus three days, an' got humsick." And Mr. Pipkin's display of ivory over his own joke was prodigious.

"If it was pulling red-root all summer, I own I 'd a little d'ruther drive," said Jack. "But I don't want to go back on to the canal." He could n't have told why ; but, humble as his lot was here, he seemed to have begun a better life, and to breathe a sweeter air than he had ever known before ; and if there be persons born to love what is low and vile, Jack was not one of them.

"But you 'll stick to the red-root this week, if you don't finish the job before?" said the deacon, with a twinkle of fun behind a mask of seriousness.

"Yes, if you say so," Jack replied, seeing only the mask and not the twinkle.

"Well," said Mr. Chatford, laughing, "I don't think I 'll put you to that test. A new boy that 'll lay himself right down to pulling red-root all alone, and all day, and not flunk out before supper-time, has got stuff in him of the right kind. I've watched ye, and I begin to think you 're in earnest."

"He's jest been tryin' yer grit, boy!" observed Mr. Pipkin. "And I must say yer back has stood it well."

"A'most as well as a back made a purpose," said Miss Wansey, with a sarcastic allusion to Mr. Pipkin's peculiar stoop.

"Miss Wansey," began Mr. Pipkin, turning towards her a stern countenance and formidable teeth; then checking himself, he addressed Mrs. Chatford: "I might fling back, 'at though my back is crooked, my disposition ain't, like some folks's, and I 'm thankful,—only I 've nothin' to say to the person that jest spoke." And he set the said teeth deep in a buttered biscuit.

Miss Wansey looked much amused at this reflection upon herself, and said, addressing the company in a very general manner, "Did I speak to Mr. Pipkin? I was n't aware that I made any remark to Mr. Pipkin! So, if he means that *my* disposition is crooked—"

But here Mr. Chatford interrupted her by asking Jack how he would like to work with him and the boys the next day, — "then," said he, "when we get the corn hoed, we'll all clap to and help you out with the red-root."

Jack now understood that his day's task had been set him as a trial of his constancy; and his heart leaped joyfully within him, as he replied that he would like that "fust-rate."

"Then, after supper," said the deacon, "you and Phineas may go over to the store and get a couple more hoes. Stop at the blacksmith's shop, too, Phineas, and see if that trace-chain is mended which I left there Saturday night."

"Yes, sir," said Phin, dutifully, concealing the delight which this commission gave him; for it was that artful young gentleman's policy to have it appear that he went to please his parent, not himself. "It'll be fun!" he whispered to Jack as soon as they were out of the horse. "We'll take Lion, and go by Mr. Welby's and maybe get Jase, and then look at the woodchuck-trap going over, and go in a swimming as we come back, and, besides, we sha' n't have to help milk."

Jack whistled for his dog, and the three started. They soon hailed Jase Welby, who at first looked rather shyly at Phin, remembering their recent falling out, but afterwards concluding to forget it, with a little teasing he got his father's permission to do some trifling errand at the store.

"That's the dog, hey?" said Jase. "I wish I could have seen him tackle the squire's bull! Ab told about it. Lucky we did n't shoot him, — remember?" turning to Jack.

They were passing the scene of our hero's encounter with the two boys, before the door of the stable, that miserable Saturday night, which now seemed to him so long ago. Jack remembered only too well; the gloomy barn-yard, the heavily breathing cattle, the pin drawn from the door, the sudden alarm, the two lads rushing out upon him from the shed, the lantern flashed into his face, and the gun levelled at his head, — all this passed vividly through his mind; and was he that homeless boy, seeking refuge in a barn upon a bed of straw, and driven forth like a thief into the dismal night? What a wonderful revolution in his life had taken place since then! Jack scarcely knew himself, thinking of the change; and he had to lay his hand on Lion's neck to make things seem real to him.

He was not much inclined to talk of the adventure; and the three boys, quitting the barn-yard, turned into the lane which Jack had first traversed in darkness and despair. He tried to make out his course beyond it, and thought he found the stone over which he stumbled and on which he sat when he discovered the colliers' camp. He had occasion to pass that stone many times afterwards in his life, and he could never look upon it without emotion; for was it not the turning-point of his destiny, — the

point of utmost discouragement, from which he looked up and saw far off through the rainy dark that little flickering flame of hope start up and fall and rise again in the woods ?

They kept on across the fields, going out of their way to look at Phin's woodchuck-trap, which was not sprung ; then, leaving the swamp and the charcoal-pit on their right, they came out of the high woods upon a hilly pasture commanding a view which made Jack draw another long breath. Below them lay a valley stretching northward towards a sea of forests, above the tops of which could be seen the blue rim of Lake Ontario. The valley was spotted with farms ; not far off in the west lay a village ; and near by, along the edge of the irregular plateau from which they gazed, wound a great, slow, watery snake, its broad glimmering back ringed here and there by a bridge.

"Ye know that, Jack ?" said the grinning Phineas.

Did he know it ? the footpath of many a summer's wanderings, the winding track of his floating home, — the canal !

"Le's go down, and ride up to the Basin on a boat," said Phin. "There's one coming, — a line boat ; we can jump on to it from the bridge."

But Jack, fearing to meet somebody who knew him, — perhaps the old man Berrick himself, — declined the pleasure ; and as Lion would not go without him, the proposed ride was given up.

"I want to keep with Lion when we go to the blacksmith's shop, any way," said Phin. "Duffer's

house is close by, and Duffer's dog always comes out at a feller. He took down Sam Collins the other day, and had him by the throat, when the blacksmith came out with a hot iron and drove him off. He fights every dog that comes along, and he has killed five or six dogs. He 's the tyrant of the town."

Phin had not exaggerated the vicious propensities of this notorious dog. No sooner had the boys, entering the village, stopped at the blacksmith's shop, than out bounced that belligerent animal, bristling up, and advancing with fierce growls upon Lion.

"Please to call your dog off, Mr. Duffer!" Phin cried out to a man standing in the door of a stable opposite.

The man — a great, red-faced, black-whiskered fellow, almost as brutal-looking as his dog — thereupon came saunteringly across the street. He had one hand in his pocket; the other held a "black-whip," trailing the thick, pliant, snake-like end in the dust behind him.

"I cac'late," said he, "'t my dorg can lick any dorg in the county. My dorg's name is Grip. Look sharp, Grip! I never sets my dorg on, but if my dorg wants to fight, I jest stands by and sees fair play. Look alive, Grip!"

There was a circular fire on the ground before the shop, heating a tire which was soon to go upon a wagon-wheel in waiting. Near by stood the wagon, into which Phin leaped with wonderful alacrity. It was plain to be seen that Duffer was almost as much

the terror of the village as his dog. Even Jase, who was not a cowardly boy, looked not a little disturbed in his mind as he walked about, carefully keeping the fire between him and Duffer's dog and whip.

"Say, Jack!" said Phin, eager to mask his fear under any pretence, "this is our old wagon that pa and Mose broke down yesterday; have a ride?"

Jack — whose long experience on the canal had given him an audacity in dealing with rough characters which the two farm boys could only admire — did not care to ride.

"Say! look here!" he cried, trying to keep the animals apart; "I don't want my dog chawed up, and I don't want him to chaw up your dog."

"What ye go'n' to do about it?" said Duffer, with a sort of ferocious gayety, turning his quid, while he reversed the position of his whip, bringing the long, snaky, menacing tip in front of him.

Jack quietly picked up a smith's hammer in the door of the shop. "I'll keep my dog out of the way if I can," said he; "if I can't — your dog must look out!"

"Touch my dorg, an' I'll cut yer clo'es on yer back all inter strings an' ribbons with this whip!" said Duffer, with a cool, cruel smile.

"I've seen whips afore to-day, and big bullies at the t' other end of 'em, and I never was afraid of one yet!" And Jack — who, I suppose, had never stood greatly in fear of any man except old Berrick when he was angry — grasped the hammer handle till his

knuckles were white. His face was white too, — not with fear, however, as Duffer, who was really a coward, saw with some uneasiness.

A crowd of fellows from the tavern and groceries had by this time rushed to the spot. Duffer gave a wink to one of them standing behind Jack; and he, reaching under the boy's shoulder, with a sudden wrench wrested the hammer from his hand. As Jack turned to recover it, the dogs clinched.

"Let 'em alone!" cried Duffer, swinging his whip. "Fair play! stand back there! make a ring!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LION'S STRATAGEM.

POOR Jack, disarmed, could only stand by and watch in rage and distress what seemed the unequal contest between the two dogs.

Lion's aversion to the fight had given his adversary an advantage over him from the start. While he was retreating, in obedience to his young master, Grip — rightly named — seized him by the nose with that terrible hold for which the bull-dog is noted. Lion gave one involuntary yelp of pain, — the only cry that escaped him, — then exerted all his strength to baffle his antagonist.

"Leave 'em be!" cried Duffer, standing with his whip inside the ring, like a circus-master. "Grip's good for him! When he gits that holt oncet he never lets go! Stand back there, boys! You'll see the fun! Fair play's my motto!"

Hardly had he said this when the tide of battle turned, Lion effecting by strategy what could not have been done by force.

Almost from the first he fought his antagonist in the direction of the fire, forcing him nearer and nearer the ring of burning coals under the now red-hot cart-tire. Grip saw the ruse too late. At that very moment Lion, with a sudden turn of his head and

shoulders, swung him upon the blazing brands. With a howl, he loosed his hold ; and in an instant Lion had him by the throat. Jack yelled with delight, and the crowd shouted with applause and sympathy, as the hated tyrant dog went down in the dust.*

But just then Duffer sprang to the rescue. With blows and kicks, amid cries of "Fair play !" "That's what ye call fair play !" he beat Lion off, and sent his own dog yelping to the stable.

"No chawin' throats !" said he, blusteringly. "I stops that, anyhow ! Sass me ?" And making a random cut at a small boy in the crowd, he walked away, trailing his whip behind him. He looked back but once, as some, bolder than the rest, hooted and jeered at him ; then disappeared in the stable.

Jack said nothing. Having drawn Lion to the smith's water-tank, he was bending affectionately over him, laughing and sobbing and washing the bitten nose.

"Come ! le's go !" said Phin, pale with excitement, leaping down from the wagon.

"Go ahead, and do your errands at the store," replied Jack. "I'll wait here" ; for he did not care to be seen near the canal.

"*He* may come back !" said Phin, casting an apprehensive glance at the stable.

Jack laughed, and stroked Lion's head. Neither

* Readers inclined to doubt the probability of this incident are referred to Wood's "Natural History," in which a similar instance of canine sagacity is related of another Newfoundland dog.

Duffer nor Duffer's dog came near him again, as he waited and watched the smiths putting the tire on the wheel. Phin and Jase did their errands ; then, with the new hoe and the mended chain, the boys started for home. They had enough to talk about, and there was no end to the pats and praises bestowed upon Lion.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SCENE ON THE CANAL.

ON the way Phin renewed his proposal to go in a swimming.

"I have n't been in this year. Besides," said he, "it's about time for the packet to go down, and if we stop we'll see it."

Jase thought it would be a good thing to cool off after the excitement of the dog-fight; and Jack consented, for it was now growing dark, and he no longer feared a recognition from any of his canal acquaintances.

"Can you swim, Jack?" Phin inquired. Jack replied, modestly, that he could swim a little. "O, I can swim on my back and every way!" And Phin continued to boast while they went down to the "heel-path," took off their clothes under a clump of bushes, and plunged into the canal, — Lion along with them.

"Ain't it fun to have the dog in a swimming with us!" cried Jase; and all splashed and ducked and swam about together.

Suddenly Jase cried, "Where's Jack?" He had disappeared. Phin looked scared. "Find him, Lion! — He's got into a hole somewhere!" exclaimed Jase, while the dog paddled about unconcernedly.

"Coop!" said a voice from the tow-path.

"There he is, 'way across the canal!" said Phin.
"Jack! how did you get there?"

"I'll show you!" A splash,— Jack disappeared again, and a minute later his head bobbed up, dripping, within a few yards of Phin's knees.

"He swims under water!" said Jase, in great admiration at a feat the like of which these simple farm-boys had never before chanced to witness.

"Well! I can do that after a little practice," said Phin. "Can ye tread water, Jack?"

Jack could "tread water," and swim on his back or side, or float, turn somersets backwards or forwards, and do anything else Phin was pleased to mention. He performed, too, some original and entertaining feats in the water with his dog; in one of which he was engaged when Jase cried out, "Packet! packet!"

Jack had pulled a bough from the bushes, for Lion to drag him ashore by when he played that he was drowned. He now revived, and all waited up to their necks in the canal for the packet to pass. First came, one after the other, the three heavily trotting horses, the last one ridden by the driver; then the jaunty tow-line; then the slender boat cutting the water with its handsome prow. The driver, at sight of the youngsters, cracked his whip, starting up his team smartly, in order to raise a swell to cover them; and the boat soon passed, rolling a long wave after it to either shore.

There were several passengers on deck, enjoying the pleasant twilight ; and the captain at the stern amused some children by throwing three or four ineffectual potatoes at the boys in the water. They tossed in the wake, and dodged the vegetables, and Phin and Jase called it fun ; but Jack's thoughts were carried back to another scene. He saw himself a ragged driver, following his own team along the tow-path, and watching with vain regret this same packet (now making its "down trip") as it disappeared about a bend, bearing the friendly passenger but for whose kind words and wise counsels he might have remained that ragged driver still.

"I wonder if he is aboard !" thought Jack. "I'd give anything to see him ! I wish he could know what has happened to me, and how I remember him !" And once more, but now with what different emotions ! he watched the trim boat as it went from sight about a bend.

"O, you should see Bromley's packet !" said Phin, boastingly. "The Redbird's ahead of anything on the canal !"

The water was too cold for the boys to stay long in it. Going out soon, they were putting on their clothes, when Jase exclaimed, "Hullo ! here comes a square-toed packet !" a popular nickname for a scow. It was drawn by a pair of gaunt horses, harnessed abreast, and pulling feebly at a rotten tow-line, hung with dripping knots where it had been broken and tied again.

"Crows have got a mortgage on them horses," cried Jase.

"Old barrels must be cheap where they come from," said Phin, in sarcastic allusion to the animal's projecting ribs



These remarks, though not designed for the driver's ears, reached them; and he flung back some highly irrelevant replies. He magnanimously offered to lick all three of the boys with his little finger, standing on one leg, if they would come across the canal to him;

and Phin he promised more particularly to swing four times about his head, and then snap his toenails off.

"Yaas ! I guess not !" said Phin, not greatly tempted by these offers. And he added in a low voice, "Sass him, Jack ! Come ! sass him, why don't ye ?" — holding in high esteem, and justly, our friend's accomplishments in that line.

Jack, who was certainly capable of taking a lively part in the controversy, and who had lately given sufficient proof of his courage, acted strangely. He shrank almost out of sight in the bushes, where he made Lion lie down, and where he hastily and silently slipped on his clothes, shivering from head to foot ; having recognized the gaunt horses, and his own late companion, Dick the driver.

It was Berrick's scow that was passing. Pete was at the helm, and Molly was sitting on the low cabin roof, just as Jack had seen them a hundred times before. Everything about the scow looked wonderfully familiar, yet somehow strange, as if he beheld it after a lapse of years. Nothing had changed but himself ; he saw it with new eyes.

His heart yearned towards his old friend Pete, and even towards Molly, and he longed to speak to them ; yet when he thought of going back to his old life with them, it was with such a revulsion of feeling that he would sooner, I think, have drowned himself in the canal.

He wondered where the scow had been these two

days. He had left it not more than six or seven miles below, and, slowly as it travelled, it should have been, he thought, many miles beyond the Basin by this time.

"It must have been laid up somewhere — on my account!" he said to himself. That seemed to him very strange. He wondered, too, where Berrick was, — "tipsy in his bunk, maybe"; or was he still ashore, perhaps hunting for him?

Even while Jack was peering anxiously through the bushes a head emerged from the companion-way, and one question in his mind was answered. There was no mistaking the rough features of Captain Jack Berrick. There he stood, bareheaded, looking about in the twilight, with Molly by his side and Pete near by bracing himself against the tiller; not a word was spoken by either, as the scow moved slowly and silently out of sight.

"Ho! Jack was afraid!" said Phin, jeeringly.

"There's no use getting into trouble with these drivers, — I know the kind of fellers they are!" said Jack, so solemnly that Phin turned and cast a quick glance after the scow, as if he expected to see the driver coming hastily back to keep some of his rash promises.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JACK AND ANNIE FELTON

MISS ANNIE FELTON followed the custom, almost universal with country school-teachers in those days, of "boarding around." There was no special necessity of her doing this, for she would have been a welcome guest at her Aunt Chatford's house during the entire summer term. But Annie was a favorite with both pupils and parents, many of whom esteemed as a favor what was too commonly regarded as a tax, and insisted upon having "the teacher to board." So she generally spent only the interval from Saturday till Monday with her relatives, and enjoyed the hospitalities of some other family in the district during the rest of the week.

This arrangement made it awkward for Jack to take advantage of her kind offer to instruct him. His eagerness to learn, however, together with an ardent desire to see this dear friend once more, prompted him to overcome slight difficulties; and on Wednesday evening, as soon as his work was done and Mr. Chatford's permission obtained, he hastened, book in hand, and with a bright and hopeful countenance, to find Miss Felton at her boarding-place.

She met him at the door with a pleasant smile, and

a cordial pressure of the softest, tenderest hand in the world, Jack thought.

"I was looking out for you, — I thought you would come to-night," she said. "But where is my other friend?"

"What friend?" Jack asked.

"Why, Lion, to be sure! Did n't you think I would want to see him too? The friend who saved my life! Give my love to him, and tell him I think he is the dearest, best old dog alive!"

How happy Jack was as she said this! Casting another radiant glance at him over her shoulder, she led the way to an old cider-mill behind the house. The building was roofed, but open at the sides; and there, seated upon a rustic bench, — shielded from the dews which were just beginning to fall, but with the beautiful, perfumed summer evening breathing and smiling all about them, from a blossoming earth and rosy sky, — he read to her several pages before it was dark.

"You have improved wonderfully since Sunday!" she said. "How happens it?"

"O, I don't know, — I've ketched up a book every chance I could git," replied Jack.

"I'm glad you have *caught* up a book every chance you could *get*," said Annie, with a slight emphasis which showed Jack his errors of speech, and taught him, in the sweetest way, how to correct them. "But you must not let study interfere with your work. People don't like to see a boy with a book

in his hand every time he is required to do something."

"O, I don't do so," said Jack. "But we all have a nooning; and while Mr. Chatford takes a nap, and Mr. Pipkin smokes his pipe or scolds back at Miss Wansey, and Phin works on his woodchuck-skin, and Moses does what he pleases, — that's the time when I ke — catch up a book."

"That's right. I see you are going to improve very fast. Keep on, and we'll have you so far along that you won't be ashamed to go to school next winter."

"Oh! do you think I can go?"

"Why not? if you make yourself so useful that Uncle Chatford's folks conclude to keep you."

"And will you teach the winter school?" Jack eagerly inquired.

"O no! Big boys — young men even — will go to that; and it is supposed that only a strong man is capable of managing them," said Miss Felton, laughing.

"I think you could manage them better than anybody!" Jack replied, in the simplicity of his heart; "and I'm sure you know enough to teach the biggest of 'em."

Annie laughed again as she rose from the bench. "I have promised myself that I would make a call this evening," she said. "Will you walk with me?"

Of course Jack would, and be delighted to. She

left him, to enter the house, and presently came out again with her bonnet on and a basket in her hand. He sprang to relieve her of the burden.

"I am going over to see poor old Aunt Patsy," she said; "and Mrs. Gould has been good enough to give me something to take to her."

Jack was glad she was going there, for he had felt that he ought to visit the old woman again and see if she had any more wood for him to cut. It was a charming walk to her house, over a wild cross-road, between old walls overhung and half hidden by blackberry-bushes, elders, and sumachs, with here and there a sassafras and thorn tree. The robins were piping their last pensive notes in the soft twilight, and many a dewy blossom scented the air. Jack's young heart overflowed with happiness, as he walked through these scenes by Annie's side, carrying her basket, telling her of his new life on the farm, his ambition and his hopes, and listening to her gentle voice.

Arrived at Aunt Patsy's door, they found it open, and heard within a strange sound, either of laughter or distress, it would have been hard to say which. Getting no reply, after knocking, Annie looked in. There sat the old woman, with her hands crossed upon the handle of her cane, her head on her hands, and her feeble old body bent forward, convulsed with alternate coughing and laughing.

"You seem to be having a merry time all by yourself, auntie," said Annie, entering.

"O, laws bless ye, I'm glad to see ye! I did n't know whether you'd ever come agin or not. Take a cheer, if you can find one fit to set in. You too?" said the old woman, perceiving Jack. "Well, well, I do declare! The age o' meracles ain't passed! But you've missed your chance o' cutting up my wood!" And the old woman broke into another fit of coughing and laughing.

"Here are some little things Mrs. Gould sent you," said Annie, opening her basket.

"Mis' Gould?" echoed the old woman, lifting her short-clipped gray head and staring at Miss Felton over her cane. "MIS' GOULD?"

"Certainly; why not?"

"Now ye're jokin'! Don't tell me! Mis' Gould? She never done sich a thing in all her born days!"

"Do you think I would tell you a story about it?" said Annie.

"Laws bless ye, no. But Mis' Gould — why, she was a Biggerton! the Biggertons was always as clus as the bark to a tree, and she's one o' the tightest. If she sent me anything, you put her up to it; it's all your doin's, Miss Felton, bless your dear good soul!"

Annie blushed, and to change the conversation said, "You seem very much better, Aunt Patsy, than when I saw you Sunday."

"Better? I guess! You done me a sight of good! I'm wheezin'; for I got into a laughin' fit, and that set me coughin', — and — O ho! ho!"

"Do tell us what pleases you so!"

"Why, that Chatford boy — Phineas — you're his cousin, but I won't spile a story for relation's sake, — he's been here. He come over an hour an' a half ago, — peeked in, and says he, 'Got any wood ye want me to cut up, Aunt Patsy?' 'O yes, plenty,' says I, for Don Curtis brought me a little jag yesterday. 'I'll cut some for ye,' says he. 'O, will ye?' says I. 'Well, there's the old saw and the hoss and the axe,' says I; and he went to work. In a little while he comes in and sets down, and begins to talk round, — but I knowed what he was arter, and I could n't take a hint to save myself; so he went back to the shed and worked another spell. Then he come to the door and talked agin. No use. Third time. 'I cut up all the wood, Aunt Patsy,' says he, grinnin' from ear to ear. 'O, have ye?' says I. 'I'm obleeged to ye, I'm sure. Give my respects to yer ma,' says I. 'And come agin, won't ye?' says I. 'I thought mabby ye'd give me suthin',' says he. 'Oh! give ye?' says I. 'I thought you'd come to do a good turn for a poor old woman,' says I. 'So I did,' says he, 'but can't ye give me that pocket-compass ye showed us t'other day?' 'That? I promised that to the boy that was with ye; no, I could n't give ye that, no way in the world!' says I. He teased, but 't was no use; and off he went, the crestfallenest, silliest-lookin' boy, — and I laughed!"

Annie and Jack laughed too, — this anecdote was so characteristic of Phin, and he had been "come up with," as the old woman said, so nicely. "For it was

never out o' good-will to me that he come, nor to anybody else but himself, in this world!" she declared.

As there was no wood to cut, Annie bade Jack good night, telling him that she wished to be alone with Aunt Patsy, and that she had no fear of walking back in the dusk without an escort.

"I shall not cross Squire Peternot's pasture, you know," she said, laughing, as she shook him by the hand.

Jack left her accordingly, though with reluctance; and walked slowly home across the fields, thinking new, deep, happy thoughts, as he looked up at the stars.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW LION GOT INTO TROUBLE.

IN place of the pocket-compass, which he went for, Phin Chatford carried away from Aunt Patsy's house that evening such a heart-burning that he could think of no relief for it except in the infliction of some dire injury upon the old lady. At first he contemplated coming back after it was dark and stoning her windows; but he was too cowardly a boy to do that. Then, in fancy, he several times set fire to her house, and saw it burn up with her in it, hugely to his gratification. It was not Phin's way to seek revenge at the cost of much personal risk to himself, or he might possibly have taken measures to carry out that cheerful programme.

He had already told of the discovery which he and Jack had made on Sunday, that old Danvers was courting Aunt Patsy; and he now determined to repeat the story spiced with malicious exaggerations. He accordingly took pains to pass Squire Peternot's house on his return home; and, seeing the old man coming out of his barn, he called to him, — "Going to be a wedding over here in a few days, 'd ye know it?"

"What do you mean by that?" said the squire, sternly.

"Old Danvers's going to marry Aunt Patsy. Grodson says so; and I've seen him going into her house ever so many times. Thought you'd like to hear what nice neighbors you're going to have."

Phin knew how irritating a subject this would be to the worthy Peternot, and he was pleased to hear him answer back, with something between a snarl and a growl, "Nice neighbors! They're the scum o' the airth, both on 'em. Right on the corner of my farm! But she can't marry; she has got one husband above ground."

"He's dead," said Phin.

"That's a lie," answered the squire, promptly. "Her second husband has been back; he was seen about here only two days ago. One of my men saw him, and knew him."

Phin was beginning to stammer out an explanation, when a happy thought struck him. "I meant, her first husband's dead, and her second's been back and signed an agreement with old Danvers. Old Danvers pays him thirty dollars to give up his claim on the place, and he takes the old woman in the bargain."

"Danvers has no thirty dollars to give," growled Peternot.

"When he sells his charcoal," Phin explained. "All I know is what his partner and everybody else says, and what I've seen. He's in her house court ing her now."

Master Chatford had seen somebody enter Aunt

Patsy's door after he left, and he thus skilfully changed the fact to a fable. Squire Peternot was in a state of mind to believe the worst in regard to the old woman who had so long been in his way; so the seed Phin scattered fell upon good ground.

The next day, and for many days thereafter, the names of Aunt Patsy and old Danvers were coupled together, and buzzed from mouth to mouth, with derision and indignation. A country neighborhood is always sure to feel itself outraged by such proceedings as were now reported of that disreputable pair. Is it because its moral sense is roused? Hardly, since it is not the really virtuous, but ordinarily the lowest members of a community who are violent in their resentment against the offenders. When Aunt Patsy was married to her second husband in due form, and no commandment was broken, the mob-spirit of the town made the affair its business, and greeted the newly wedded pair with a mock serenade, or "charivari," making the night hideous about them with the noise of tin pans, tin horns, conchs, and cow-bells. And she had often since been the victim of clownish tricks, simply because she was poor, eccentric, and lonely. Society seems to think its outcasts can have no sacred privacy, or rights it is bound to respect.

One evening when Jack called to see her he found her in sore trouble. For several nights there had been disturbances around her house, stones had been thrown against it, loud knocks had come upon her

door, and the night before somebody had tried to get in.

"I'm afraid o' my life!" said she. "Why can't the wretches leave an old woman alone?"

"They say you have bad company," replied Jack.

"If I had company of any sort, I should n't be afraid. I hain't so much as a dog to stay with me. I wish I had!" Then a sudden thought seemed to strike her. "Make your dog stay with me to-night. He'll scare 'em away! I'll let him out the first thing in the morning."

Jack was glad to do anything for the frightened old creature; and after some coaxing he made the reluctant Lion, who was present, lie down in her house and watch, while he went off and left him.

The next morning, as Jack came out of the kitchen door with his milk-pail, there was Lion returning through the orchard. He ran and leaped upon his young master with the air of a dog conscious of having done a good action; and yet Jack thought there was something strange in his appearance. Examining him closely, he made an alarming discovery. There was blood upon his nose and about his mouth.

"What's the matter with that dog?" said Mr. Pipkin, coming out after Jack. "Been fightin'?"

"I don't know," replied Jack, puzzled and frightened. "Take my pail to the barn; I'll be there in a little while."

"Where ye going, Jack?" Moses called after him from the door.

Jack made no reply, but ran through the orchard, leaped the brook and the wall, and crossed the prohibited ground of Squire Peternot's pasture, never stopping to take breath till he had reached Aunt Patsy's door.

"How are ye, Bright-and-early!" she cheerfully greeted him.

Jack gasped out, "I thought something terrible had happened here! My dog just came home with his mouth covered with blood!"

Aunt Patsy said there had been no disturbance at her house that night, and that she had let Lion out about three quarters of an hour before. There was no blood on his mouth then.

More puzzled than ever, and still feeling that something was wrong, Jack hurried back across the fields; he went to look at Lion's mouth once more, and then proceeded thoughtfully to the cow-yard.

The milking was done, and the family were at breakfast, when suddenly there came a terrible rap at the door, — terrible at least to poor Jack. His heart was full of vague apprehensions; nor were his fears allayed when the deacon, from his seat at the table, called, "Come in!" and Squire Peternot and his cane entered.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE OLD MUSKET IS PUT TO USE.

THE family were surprised to see the squire at that hour; and his awful countenance, as he stood in the doorway and struck his cane upon the threshold, showed that he had come on no peaceful mission.

"Where was your dog last night?" he demanded, addressing the deacon with the frowning look of a man holding his neighbor to a strict accountability for some great wrong.

"My dog? The boy's dog—" the deacon began; when Peternot interrupted him.

"*Your* dog! I say *your* dog! You harbor him, and you are responsible for him, Neighbor Chatford!"

"Yes, yes, — why, well, sartin!" said the deacon. "If he has done any damage, I suppose I am responsible. What's he been up to?"

"He's been up to suthin'," remarked Mr. Pipkin, "that's sure! He had been off somewheres, and he come home 'arly this mornin' with his chops bloody. I thought he'd been a fightin'."

"Fightin'?" said the squire. "He's been killin' my sheep!" And down came the heavy oak stick upon the floor.

"You don't say, Squire!" exclaimed the deacon.

"I do say!" replied the squire, with terrible

severity. "Soon as ever I set eyes on 'em this mornin', I said, 'It's that dog's work!' I knowed well enough what would come on 't, when you took that boy and his whelp in!" — bending a look of wrath upon pale, shivering Jack.

"How many sheep, Squire?" asked Mr. Pipkin, with a solemnity befitting the occasion.

"Five! Two wethers — the pick o' the flock — and three o' my likeliest ewes. Bit in the neck, every one on 'em."

"You don't think our dog killed 'em all, do you?" said Moses.

"Like enough. It's a reg'lar dog's trick, — take an old hand at it, as this dog sartin is. He just goes into a flock, tackles a sheep, bites her in the neck, and licks her blood as long as it flows free, then kills another, and so on, — maybe half a dozen. Le's go and look at the cur."

Men and boys rose in great excitement from the table. Phin whispered to Jack as they were going out: "I noticed him, — blood all about his mouth; — can't ye make up a lie to get him off?"

Jack could not utter a word, — not even when Mr. Chatford told him to "call the rogue." Moses whistled, and Lion came.

The stiff-jointed old squire stooped and gave one sharp, scrutinizing glance at the poor fellow's guilty chops, then, turning with lips compressed and triumphant, he merely said, "Ha!" with a deep aspiration and a grim look at the deacon.

"I guess there 's no doubt about it, Squire," said Mr. Chatford. "Though I would n't have believed it of the pup. Of course I 'll pay the damages."

"That 's understood," said Peternot. "But there 's another thing."

"What 's that?"

"The dog must be put out of the way."

"I suppose so," — dubiously.

"Killed!" said the inexorable squire.

"We 'll keep him chained," spoke up Phineas, rather faintly, for he knew that Peternot's wrath would thereupon fall on him, — as it did.

"Chained? Fiddlesticks! How long afore he 'd be in my flock again, with you boys foolin' with him? I 've a right to demand that that dog shall be shot, and I demand it. No money 'll pay the damages I 've suffered, without that 's done."

"Jack," said the deacon, "tie your dog."

Jack went and got a rope, as if it had been a halter for his own neck, and put it upon Lion's.

"I always said I would n't have a dog, for fear of this very thing," the deacon went on. "But I 'd got reconciled to this one. He 's a good, noble dog every other way."

"And he saved our Annie's life," said Mrs. Chatford; while little Kate cried bitterly.

Then Jack, standing with the halter about Lion's neck, looked up, palely facing the squire and the deacon, and all gathered there in that little group by the door, and said, — "Let me tell you something. I

don't say he did n't kill the sheep. I won't lie about it. But it ain't proved yet."

"Ain't proved?" echoed Squire Péternot. "Then nothing was ever proved in this world! Proved, indeed!"

"He can't speak and explain," Jack went on. "If he could —"

"If he could, no doubt we should have as pretty a string of lies as you told me that night you came to my house," said the rigid Peternot.

The only visible effect these words had upon Jack was a slight change in his voice, which struck a deeper tone.

"You've been always good to me, Mr. Chatford,— Mrs. Chatford! I'm thankful to you; I hope I have showed that I am! I owe you more than I can tell! But I must ask you one thing more. Don't shoot my dog without giving me one chance for him! If he killed the sheep, it was because he did n't know any better. Let me just take him over where they are, and then you see if he ever goes near a sheep to hurt it again!"

"No dog was ever cured of sheep-killing yet," said the squire, in his grinnest manner; "and I tell ye the brute that killed mine was an old hand at it." Then with another decided stroke of the cane upon the ground, "The only way to settle this business is to shoot the dog!"

"There's reason in all things," began Mr. Pipkin, who was the last person Jack had supposed would

ever put in a plea for Lion ; “ and now, Squire, I’ll agree to take the responsibility, and see ’t that dog is kep’ chained every night.”

“ You might at least wait just one night,” said Miss Wansey for the first time in the memory of the family uniting her voice with Mr. Pipkin’s ; “ for who knows what may turn up in that time ? ”

“ Miss Wansey,” said Mr. Pipkin, gratefully, “ you ’ve spoke a good word, if ye never did afore.”

“ Thank ye, Mr. Pipkin,” said Miss Wansey ; “ I’m glad you think so.”

“ One night ? ” said Peternot, his mind too deeply set in its old grudge against Lion and his master to listen to any such arrangement. “ Jest look at that boy’s face ! Do you see what I see ? He only wants a chance to start out in the dark, let his dog loose and clear out with him, — and that ’s the last you ’d ever see of boy or dog.”

As a wild thought of doing some such thing as this had indeed flashed through Jack’s mind, the squire was not perhaps very far out of the way in his suspicions.

“ Get the gun, Moses,” said the deacon, who, with all his goodness, was capable of executing a just and stern decree. “ I’m sorry,” — laying his hand on Jack’s shoulder, — “ but there’s no doubt whatever of the dog’s guilt. What the squire says is only too true, I fear. It’s a fault that can’t be cured. He ’d have to be killed sooner or later, and we may

as well make the agony short. We all feel bad about it."

"You don't!" Jack broke forth. "Suppose it was one of your children—little Kate here; what if she had done something, and was to be killed? How would you feel then? Well! that's the way I feel now! I'd rather you'd shoot me!" And his wild grief burst in convulsive, tearless sobs.

Mr. Chatford was shaken. "Squire," said he, "is there no other way?"

Peternot coughed a dry, hard cough, and answered, relentlessly, "I have said!"

Just then Moses came with the old musket which his father had carried in the war of 1812. "I would n't be hasty, father!" said Mrs. Chatford, in a broken, earnest voice.

"It seems to be the only way to keep peace between us and our neighbor," replied the deacon. He winked at Mr. Pipkin and pointed at a peach-tree. "It's a sacrifice that's got to be made. Did you bring the bag of bucks, not, Moses?"

"Phin has it"; and Moses proceeded to load the gun.

"He don't look to me like a dog that's been killin' sheep," remarked Mr. Pipkin as he took the rope from Jack's hand, and led Lion towards the tree; "and he did n't when he fust come hum. There was the bloody chops, but he did n't have none of the hang-dog ways of a cur that's been up to mischief. He don't know now what it all means."

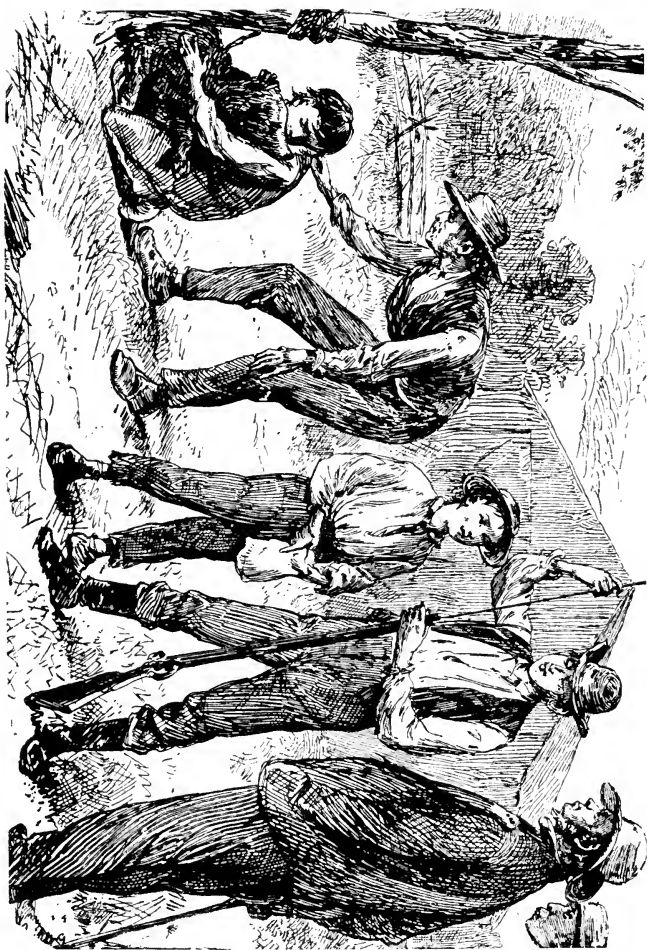
He tied the dog, however, with a good strong knot. "Now stand off, — you'll haf' ter!" he said to Jack. But Jack, instead of obeying, threw himself upon Lion's neck, and clung to him, as if he meant to make the murderers of his friend kill him too.

"There, there!" said the deacon, coming up to him; "it can't be helped, my son. You've been a good boy since you've been with us; don't spoil it all now, — don't wait to be taken away by force."

Just then the sound of the ramrod in the gun smote upon Jack's ear. *Thud! thud!* it went upon the heavy charge of powder in the long, black, ringing musket-barrel.

The poor lad could endure no more. He clung a moment longer to Lion's neck, with a farewell embrace, then fled with a wild, piteous wail into the orchard. He could not save his friend, and he would not see him die.

"JACK THREW HIMSELF UPON LION'S NECK," ETC.



CHAPTER XXIX.

SQUIRE PETERNOT'S DEADLY AIM.

THEN first the dog seemed to comprehend the nature of these preparations, and the cause of his young master's grief. He struggled violently to get away, but in vain ; he had been too securely tied.

Phin had brought the wrong shot-bag (purposely, the squire thought) ; and during the delay occasioned by this mistake Jack hastened on through the orchard and across the brook, listening momentarily in grief and terror for the report of the gun.

Suddenly, lifting half-blinded eyes, he saw a tall, lank man with the hair and features of an Indian, and a bottle in his sagging coat-pocket, coming towards him. It was Grodson, the charcoal-burner.

"I'm lookin' for my pardner," said he. Jack did not heed him. "Have ye seen old Danvers?" Grodson inquired, stopping in the path ; but Jack, full of woe, would have hurried past him. Then Grodson said, "I can tell ye a good thing about your dog."

Jack stopped instantly, and with red, flaming eyes looked into the man's dark face. "I was lookin' for my pardner," said Grodson. "He's been missin'. Our coal's in the market, and he had money, and money and old Danvers never could agree. As he did n't come back last night, I started 'arly this morn-

in', thinkin' Aunt Patsy might have seen him. I was goin' towards her house, — I was jest gittin' over the fence yender, when her door opened, and I looked to see my pardner come out. But out come a dog instid. It was your dog."

"O, speak quick!" cried Jack; "they 're shooting him now!"

"Shootin' him? what for?"

"Killing sheep!"

"I 'd sooner think 't was t' other dog killed the sheep, — if any 's been killed," said Grodson.

"What other dog?"

"The one I see comin' from over Peternot's way jest arter I noticed your'n."

"O, come, come! quick, before they shoot him!" Jack pleaded, beside himself with sudden hope and fear.

"Let me tell ye," said Grodson, walking slowly along, "and I must wet my whistle first." He took the bottle from his pocket, and stopped to lift it to his lips; this, then, was what made the surly man so sociable. "I saw another dog," he went on, as Jack dragged him away, "comin' from the far corner of Peternot's pastur', sneakin' along, tail down, like he 'd been up to tricks —"

"O, hurry, hurry!" cried Jack. "I 'll run and tell 'em!" And breaking away from the slow Grodson, he ran for life — for his friend's life — towards the house, and the fatal peach-tree.

He had run but a few rods, when the heavy report

of a gun broke upon the morning air, followed by the short, sharp yell of a dog.

"They 've killed him ! they 've killed him !" sobbed poor Jack. He ran blindly and desperately on, however, until his feet tripped over a branch, and he fell. "Why did n't you come sooner ? why did n't you hurry ?" he cried out furiously as Grodson came slouchingly to the spot.

"I could n't," said the collier, taking Jack by the arm, not unkindly. "That was n't the business I come on. I 'm lookin' for my pardner. He had all the money, and the jug. I went on to Aunt Patsy's, and she had n't seen him ; then I went over to Don Curtis's, and finally worked my way back here. This is my last drop, if I don't find my pardner." And Grodson finished his bottle. Then he walked on in his shambling way towards the house, with poor broken-hearted Jack sobbing at his side.

Moses had delayed loading the gun as long as possible ; and finally, when the buckshot were produced, and he had ostentatiously dropped a rattling charge of them down the old musket-barrel, in the squire's sight and hearing, he discovered that he was out of wadding. Stepping into the house to get some, he quietly emptied the shot out again : then reappearing with a piece of newspaper, he rammed it down upon the wad that covered the powder. He then poured some priming into the pan — for it was an old-fashioned flint-lock — and handed the gun to the squire.

"Don't go too near," he remarked, "for he's a dreadful savage dog when he's cornered."

The squire stepped forward, put the muzzle of the musket within a yard of Lion's head, took deadly aim, and fired. It was the powder-flash in his face, and the concussion of the wads, accompanied by the terrible report, which made the dog yell; but he was otherwise unhurt; and there he crouched and trembled, to the utter astonishment of the worthy Peter-not.

"Your hand shook; you shot too high," observed Mr. Pipkin, who always had a reason for everything.

"How many buckshot did you put into this gun?" the squire demanded, turning upon Moses.

"Nine," replied Moses, who did not feel called upon to explain that he had afterwards taken them out again. "Did n't you see 'em?"

"Yis, and heerd 'em tu, — I did," said Mr. Pipkin. "Squire did n't go quite nigh enough; 't was too long a range!"

Peter-not, stung by this ironical allusion to his marksmanship, looked as if he would like to try another shot at Mr. Pipkin's front teeth, which presented a shining mark just then. But, choking down his wrath, he said, — "I must have put some of the shot into him! But I had n't my spectacles on. I'll fix him this time. I'll load the gun myself."

Moses was not inclined to give up the powder and shot; but the deacon, who understood perfectly well the previous trick, beckoned authoritatively to his son.

"No more nonsense!" he said; and so Moses, in great disgust, handed the ammunition over to the squire.

"Why did n't you take the flint out?" whispered Phin. "I think it's too bad," he said aloud, "that ye can't kill a dog, and done with it, 'stead of mangling him this way. How many times does he expect to shoot?"

Peternot, unmoved by these taunts, was reloading the musket in grim silence, when Jack threw himself over the fence and down by Lion's side, in frantic haste, shrieking out, — "'T was the other dog! — Grodson! Grodson!" — And, turning to his poor dumb friend, he searched anxiously to find if he was hurt.

"Ye better wait, 'fore ye fire another charge at that dog," remarked Grodson, putting his long legs over the fence and sitting upon it.

Then, between him and Jack, the whole story was told, acquitting the innocent Lion of the bloody deed for which he had so nearly suffered death. Jack related how he had left him to guard Aunt Patsy's house the night before; and Grodson, how he had seen him come out of her house very early that morning, and meet another dog crossing Peternot's pasture.

"This 'ere dog was goin' straight for this 'ere place," Grodson went on. "'T other dog was makin' tracks for the Basin, near as I could jedge. They met like this," — putting his forefingers together to

form an angle, — “only, soon as ever they ’d got near each other, both turned to once, like they ’d come to that spot by agreement to have a quiet fight, and flew at each other. They paid no attention to me, though I wa’ n’t three rods off. This ’ere dog fit shy for a minute, for he seemed to know t’ other dog’s trick ; he was tryin’ to git this ’ere dog by the nose. Finally he let t’ other dog git a grip of his shoulder ; then all of a suddint this ’ere dog, fust I knowed, had t’ other dog by the throat. He had a fair holt, and he never loosened his holt from that time, only to git a better holt. He chewed that throat up. He shook that t’ other dog lively. He chewed, and he shook, and he bit, and he gnawed, as if he jest meant to eat that ’ere t’ other dog. He worked over him, I should say, a good half-hour, and when he finally let go, and stopped eatin’ and shakin’, to smell on him, I should think that ’ere t’ other dog had been dead about ten or fifteen minutes. There he lies — I mean that ’ere t’ other dog — over in the pastur’ now, laid out as han’some as any dog ever you see. I did n’t interfere, for I had a grudge agin t’ other dog ; — only last week, when I was deliverin’ charcoal to the blacksmith over to the Basin, he come at me, I mean t’ other dog, and would ’a’ bit me bad, if he had n’t snapped too low, and took my boot-leg. I know his owner, — he ’s a mean scamp, by the name o’ Duffer.”

“Duffer’s dog ! Lion has killed Duffer’s dog !” screamed Phineas, wild with delight, and threw his hat into the peach-tree. “That accounts for the bloody chops !”

Jack already had Lion untied, and was crying over him for very joy. All present seemed to share his happiness and triumph, except the squire. He did n't believe the story. There might be another dog; very likely there were two in the scrape. The truth is, Peternot could not bear to miss the opportunity of taking revenge upon Lion for having once done battle with his bull; and, moreover, he knew well that his chances of getting pay for his sheep would be infinitely lessened if he should have Duffer to deal with instead of the deacon.

"It's all a subterfuge!" he declared.

"Old man!" said Grodson, slipping from the fence, and walking up to him, grasping his empty bottle by the neck, "when I say what I see and know, do you tell me I lie?"

"Nay, friend!" Peternot hastened to make answer, taking a step backward. "All you say may be so. But where had this dog been, up to the time when you saw him?"

Jack thereupon offered to produce Aunt Patsy's testimony to the fact that Lion had been shut up all night, and until that very time, in her house.

"A miserable, half-crazy creatur', — what's her testimony wuth?" muttered the squire; and, turning upon his cane, he walked off in great discontent.

The deacon laughed quietly, and went up and patted Lion and Jack, while Moses, in high spirits, told how he had disposed of the buckshot. Mrs. Chatford, Miss Wansey, and Kate, who had retired within the

house in order not to witness the slaughter (though it must be confessed that Miss Wansey peeped from the kitchen window), now came out again, and there was great rejoicing.

"I move we all a'journ and go over and look at Duffer's dead dog," observed Mr. Pipkin. The motion was seconded, and carried, — only the women-folks declining to regale themselves with that interesting spectacle. "Won't ye come, Miss Wansey?" said Mr. Pipkin, persuasively.

"No, thank ye, Mr. Pipkin," replied Miss Wansey, politely excusing herself. "My nerves have suffered terribly, a'ready, and I 'm afraid I could n't bear much more."

Men and boys, guided by Mr. Grodson, then proceeded to view the spot where the combat had taken place. Lion accompanied them; and, there, over the dead body of his enemy, he received praises and caresses which would have quite turned any weak-minded dog's head.

It took the poor old fellow a long while, however, to recover from the shock his "nerves" had received. From that time he was a greater favorite with the family than ever before; but it was observable afterwards that he had one weakness, which seemed singularly inconsistent with his noble traits of character. He was afraid of guns and of thunder.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOME FUN, AND HOW IT WAS INTERRUPTED.

THAT night Jack had gone to his room, and was poring over Scott's "Lady of the Lake" (which Miss Felton had lent him), by the light of a tallow candle, when Phin's face was thrust in at the door.

"Come quick, Jack! there's some fellers out here, and they're going to have some fun with Duffer's dog!"

Phin hurried away and Jack after him. In the back yard they found Moses and the Welby boys; and waiting at the orchard fence were two or three more lads belonging in the neighborhood.

"Where's Lion?" asked one.

"Tied," said Phin. "Father thinks we'd better keep him tied nights till the sheep-killing excitement is over."

"There's been a good many sheep killed about town lately," said Abner; "and everybody thinks now that Duffer's dog was the rogue."

"I was over to the Basin this afternoon," said Don Curtis, coming out of the orchard, where he had been talking with Bill Burbank and another tall fellow, "and I told Duffer the story. He would n't believe it; so, seeing Grodson down by the canal,—he said he was looking for his pardner,—I called him up,

and he told all about the dog-fight, in a crowd of fellers. You never see a man so mad as Duffer was !”

“Come boys ! it’s dark enough,” said Bill Burbank. “What are all these little chaps coming for ?”

“We want to see the fun,” replied Phineas.

“If you see it, you keep still about it !” said Burbank, threateningly. “Your dog was guarding the old woman’s house last night, was n’t he ?”

“Yes, she was afraid, and I let him,” answered Jack. “I thought ’t was too bad an old woman like her could n’t be left in peace.”

“I’d advise *you* to go home and go to bed !” exclaimed Bill Burbank, displeased at Jack’s remark. “Or keep quiet, understand !”

“What are they going to do ?” Jack asked anxiously of Moses, as they went through the orchard.

“I don’t know, — play a trick on Aunt Patsy, I guess.” And Moses hurried on with the crowd.

In Peternot’s pasture they were joined by three or four more fellows, so that the company now numbered about a dozen young men and boys, all eager to join in or to witness the sport. Two went off to procure a ladder. Two more seized each a hind leg of the dead dog, and dragged the carcass across the pasture in the direction of Aunt Patsy’s house.

“They’re going to take it up on the roof, and drop it down her chimney !” whispered the jubilant Phineas. “Won’t she be scar’t out of her wits ? I’m

glad I've come! But Bill Burbank is mad as he can be 'cause Abner told Jase, and Jase went and told me and Mose."

"I did n't think any better of Don Curtis, or Dan Williams, or Jim Jones," said Moses; "but I should think Bill Burbank might be in better business. And you too, Ab Welby!"

"I've nothing to do with it," replied Ab. "Don wanted me to come out, and I thought I'd like to see the fun, if there was to be any. They ain't going to hurt the old woman, — only give her an awful scare. She'll think the Old Harry himself has come, when that dead dog tumbles down her chimney!"

"Keep still there!" said one of the ringleaders, in a whisper. "Wait here till the ladder comes." The carcass was dropped upon the ground within a few rods of Aunt Patsy's door. "What's that, — a light?"

"She never has a light without she is courting," observed Phineas.

"Then old Danvers is there now!" exclaimed Don Curtis. "Keep back, the rest of you, while me and Bill reconnoitre."

Curtis and Burbank had been gone but a few minutes, when Dan Williams and Jim Jones said they would go and see what had become of them, and also disappeared in the darkness. Then somebody else went to look after Jim and Dan. The remainder of the crowd, soon growing restless, excited by curiosity, stole off one by one after their companions, until Jack was left alone beside the carcass.

"These are the fellows there was danger of my corrupting!" he said to himself. "Well, may be there was! I might have been guilty of just as mean a trick once." And the former canal-driver stood astonished to find himself the only boy in the crowd whose whole nature seemed to revolt against their mean and cruel designs.

He had been planning how he should get to Aunt Patsy's door, and warn and assist her. But now another way of circumventing the mob occurred to him; and, grasping the dead dog by the leg, he hastily dragged it away in the darkness.

Meanwhile Curtis and Burbank crept up stealthily to the window in which the light was visible. It was but a faint, flickering gleam, within the wretched abode, — a glow just bright enough for the bundles of rags, wherewith the broken panes were stuffed, to be outlined upon it in all their gloomy picturesqueness. These rags had grown plentiful since heartless youngsters had lately taken to stoning the poor grass-widow's windows.

Hearing voices within, the two self-appointed scouts pinched each other and chuckled in anticipation of some diverting discovery. There was one low, broken pane, from which the rags had been blown away by the wind; through that the sound of voices issued; and presently Burbank, pushing Curtis back with one hand, all in stealthy silence, put his eye at the narrow opening. He gazed eagerly for some seconds, during which Curtis waited impatiently for his turn; then

withdrew. He did not chuckle then; and Curtis felt, rather than saw by the glimmer of light on the retiring face, that a sudden and unaccountable change had come over his friend.



With quickened curiosity, Don took his place and peeped. An instant, — and his spirit also went out of him; so that the face so full of base merriment before, looked confused and amazed — if you could but have seen it — when it was withdrawn.

After him Jim Jones and Dan Bradly took each a peep at the broken pane, and saw and heard, in less than a minute's time, what lasted them, as food for serious reflection, during the remainder of their lives. I doubt if all the sermons they had ever heard, condensed into one, could have produced so deep and enduring an impression upon those two rude natures, as that momentary glance.

So, one by one, all the members of this thoughtless mob, great and small, looked in at Aunt Patsy's window, — Phineas last; and even that ill-intentioned youngster, the cause of so much mischief, felt abashed and rebuked by what he saw.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AUNT PATSY'S VISITOR.



HAT Phin saw — what all saw who peeped in through Aunt Patsy's broken pane — was this: —

Before a little wood fire, which had been kindled on the hearth to give warmth and cheer to the gloomy apartment, sat the old woman ; and at her side, holding her hand and comforting her, was Annie Felton. The glow of the fire was upon their faces, and it projected their shadows in grotesque, flickering forms on the cottage wall. Annie was speaking, or reciting consolatory passages from

psalm or hymn, and the old woman was drinking eagerly into her soul all the sweet words of that gentle voice. It was a wonderful picture. The old woman, no longer hideous, looked almost venerable in her humility and charmed attentiveness ; while Annie

seemed to have brought with her an atmosphere of beauty and sanctity, which spread about her and, more than the halo of the fire, filled the cottage. No wonder that those who came to jeer went away to blush at the thought of what they had proposed doing. Jack need not have dragged away the dead dog; the "fun" with it was over for that night, and indeed for all nights.

There was a shallow pit in the pasture, where the earth had been upturned by the roots of an old apple-tree blown down by the wind. Into that Jack tumbled the carcass, throwing brush and stones upon it. Such was the burial of Grip, the canine tyrant of the village. He would never kill sheep, or attack peaceable curs, or terrify little boys any more. He had fought one dog too many, and got his quietus.

Jack remained some time in the background, waiting to see whether search would be made for the carcass. Presently two persons passed quite near him, bearing between them something long and slender. It was the ladder which they had brought, and which they were now carrying silently away again. They, too, had peeped in at the window.

Astonished to find everything still about the house, Jack drew near and got upon the garden fence. Not a sight, not a sound, betrayed the presence of his late companions.

Concluding that they had departed, he was about to return home, when Aunt Patsy's door opened, and, defined upon the fire-lit background framed by

the lintels, appeared the silhouette of a figure he well knew.

Miss Felton had scarcely taken leave of the old woman at the door, when Jack was at her side.

"Why, Jack!" said she, "where did you come from?"

"I was sitting on the fence watching the house, when you came out. You are not going away alone this dark night, are you?"

"Not if you wish to go with me. But I'm not afraid. I must have stayed longer than I intended, however,—or else the evening is unusually dark."

"It is cloudy, and there is no moon," said Jack. "Where are you boarding—to-night?"

"At Mr. Hamwell's,—do you know where that is? It is on this road, but I have to cross the canal."

"So far!"

"O, it is not a great way from here!" said Annie.

Jack thought so too, when he found himself all too soon at Mr. Hamwell's door, where he must take leave of this dear friend. How swift the moments always seemed when he was with her! And yet they were not brief, if time is to be measured by the amount of life crowded into it; for he never saw her for a minute but some fresh thought or emotion was awakened in him, and half an hour with her was sure to leave him something to think of for days. Her casual smiles quickened the germ of what was good within him, and her most careless words became seeds of wisdom as he pondered them in his heart.

"All I am, all I ever shall be, I owe to her!" thought he, with a gratitude which swelled his heart and filled his eyes with tears. "To her, — and to them," remembering the Chatfords, who had been like father and mother to him. "And to that man," — the image of his unknown friend, the packet-passenger, rising before him. "I've been such a lucky fellow, after all! I thought I never should have any friend but my dog, — and now to think of them all!"

Recrossing the canal, he stopped upon the bridge. Silent and dark lay the water beneath him, — chill, without a ripple. "How many times I've travelled that tow-path on just such a night as this!" thought he. "Wonder where the old scow is now?"

A line-boat was coming, with lights at bow and stern. Jack waited to see it glide in its own glimmer down the winding channel, between dim shores, and finally, from the floating dream it seemed at first, start out into a very solid, broad-decked reality as it moved under the bridge. It passed, and, gliding on and on, became a dream again and vanished. Then Jack, with a deeply thankful feeling that in place of his once wandering life and floating abode he now had a fixed home and settled hopes, resumed his walk.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE STRANGE LIGHTS IN THE WOODS.

THE night had grown intensely dark, and soon, thinking he had passed Aunt Patsy's house without seeing it, Jack got over the wall in order to shorten his course by crossing the fields. The ground was so familiar to him that he believed he could feel his way where he could not see. But he had really left the road too soon; and it was not long before he found himself stumbling over inequalities and tearing through briars in a strange lot, where he had never been before. Turning back, and attempting to regain the road, he ran into the branching top of a fallen tree. By the time he had got well out of that he was completely bewildered, not knowing where he was. And now it began to rain.

"The road must be in *this* direction," he said, after trying to remember just where and how he had turned. But after travelling that way for a few minutes,—long enough to have reached the road, had it been the right way,—he began to step on marshy ground, and soon, tripping over a stump, fell in a pool of water.

"Here I am, away off in Peternot's swamp!" he exclaimed, and turned again to get out of it.

Just then a strange, misty, yellow gleam met his

eye. It seemed to be in the woods, somewhere in the direction of the colliers' camp. But it could not be their fire, for it was in motion, waving slowly to and fro.

"It must be a jack-o'-lantern beckoning me to follow!" thought the boy, a little startled, and wondering how it would seem to meet his ghostly namesake.

But the beckoning motion was too regular to be that of an *ignis fatuus*. Now the light vanished for a moment, as if intercepted by the trunks of trees; and now another appeared beside it, not many yards off, shining with the same misty, yellow gleam, and waving to and fro. While Jack was watching them with increasing astonishment, lo! a third light like the other two — then a fourth and fifth — flashed out in different parts of the woods, succeeded by still others, until the swamp seemed filled with gigantic fireflies flickering among the trees.

But even if Jack could have conceived of fireflies so huge, the regular motion of each would still have remained a mystery. He was no coward; yet the darkness of the night, streaked by these wavering fires, — not wavering only, but actually advancing towards him, — together with the awful silence of the scene, broken only by the pattering rain, thrilled him with superstitious fears; although his reason kept saying, "It's only men with lanterns! only men with lanterns, I know!"

Men with lanterns it was indeed, for now he heard voices; then, in a sudden blaze of lightning, the

strange gleams were all extinguished, and in their place he saw, scattered among the trees, human forms, some sheltered by umbrellas, but each holding in one hand a lantern, which he was in the act of swinging. Then darkness succeeded, — the men had disappeared, and there were the lights waving once more.

“Hullo!” cried Jack.

“Hullo!” answered a voice. Thereupon the lights became stationary, and “Hullo!” “Hullo!” was echoed throughout the woods.

“What are you looking for?” cried Jack.

“A man,” answered the voice. “Who are you?”

“I’m only a boy,” replied Jack, wondering for an instant if it were possible that all those men were out seeking him.

The lanterns were once more in motion; and now Jack perceived that they formed a long chain of lights, perhaps a couple of rods apart, sweeping in order through a belt of the woods. Even now, when he knew for a certainty what they were, their swinging motion in the darkness, their slow progress, and their mysterious errand, excited his imagination.

He made his way up towards the nearest lantern, and found it carried by Abner Welby.

“That you, Jack? where’s your lantern?”

Jack said he had no lantern. “Why, where was you when we met Grodson? He was going over to Aunt Patsy’s with a lantern just as we were coming away; looking for his pardner, he said; he’s been looking for him for two days. Then Dan Bradly re-

membered that he saw him — old Danvers, I mean — staggering into these woods yesterday with his jug, and heard somebody hollering down here afterwards. So, as we wanted something to do, we accepted Grodson's invitation, put home and got our lanterns, raised the neighbors by the way, — some had the gumption to take their umbrellas, but I did n't, — and all met down here to hunt the swamp."

Just then a shout was raised at the farther end of



the line. "Found!" "Found!" rang from man to man through the woods; and the lights soon began to cluster together in the distance. Abner and Jack hastened towards the spot, where they presently saw Grodson, Don Curtis, Bill Burbank, and Dan Bradly, lifting a dark, heavy, dripping object over a fallen log on which they had placed their lanterns.

"Drowned in six inches of water," said Don.

"And there's the cause on 't!" exclaimed Grodson, breaking the whiskey-jug against a tree.

With a shudder of horror, Jack turned away, appalled by the dreadful fate of his old friend, the charcoal-burner, whom he had once been so near having for a patron and example in life.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JACK MEETS COUSIN SYD AND ANOTHER OLD AC-
QUAINTANCE.

OLD Danvers had been six weeks buried, and was almost as much forgotten by the world as the dead dog Jack had covered with brush and stones under the roots of the old apple-tree; Grodson, sincerely mourning for his "pardner," with whom he had been associated in a strange and lonely life so many years, had sold his charcoal, and gone off, a dark and gloomy man, nobody knew whither; Aunt Patsy had had respite from persecution, and Jack had made progress; when one evening Deacon Chatford, sitting in the kitchen door smoking his pipe, said to the lad as he was coming in from the barn, "Chores all done, Jack?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, in his ready, cheerful way.

"Tired?"

"A little, — I like to be at this time of day."

"Now what are you going to do?"

"I am going to read about an hour, then I am going to bed."

"Annie says you are getting along finely with your books, considering your chances."

"I hope so," said Jack, "for if I go to school next winter, I don't care to pass for a very big blockhead."

"Go to school! Ho, ho!" The deacon puffed his pipe. "How do you expect to manage that?"

"Miss Felton said she thought a way would open for me somehow," replied Jack, blushing in the twilight.

"Well, Annie is a shrewd girl. If she said so, I guess't will be so. You like farming tolerably well?"

"I've every reason to like it; it gives me a good home, enough to do, and a chance for the future, — I hope," added Jack, with a tremor of fervency in his voice.

"I expected you 'd be asking for wages before now," remarked the deacon.

"I prefer to leave that to you — after all you have done for me," said Jack, with an overflow of gratitude. "I think my board and clothes are about all I've been worth."

The deacon puffed away contemplatively. "Well, there's something in that. But you've had only Mosès's and Phin's old clothes so far. Now the boys are going to the city to-morrow with the butter and cheese; — their mother's been talking it over with me, and what I was going to say to you, Jack, is this, — that if you like to go along with 'em and pick you out at the store where we trade a decent suit for Sunday, that'll do for you to wear to school next winter, we'll let the butter and cheese pay for it. There, there! I know what you would say; no words are needed. Be ready to start with the boys in the morning. That's all," said the deacon, knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

"Why, father! what 's the matter with Jack?" said Mrs. Chatford, coming to the kitchen door shortly after. "As he went through the room just now he was crying. He tried to speak to me, and could n't."

"Could n't he? Well, I 've had to give the boy a talking to; I suppose that 's it."

"A talking to, father! About what?"

"Oh! the new suit of clothes he is going to have to-morrow, nothing worse," said the deacon with a cough, and a tear in one corner of his eye.

The boys got an early start the next morning, driving both horses harnessed to the double wagon, which was well loaded with the products of poultry-yard and dairy. Lion went, too, to guard the load. Mrs. Chatford stood in the door, shading her eyes from the sun with her fore-arm, and repeating her charges to them, as they drove away: "Be sure and buy the clothes of Mr. Langdon! And remember which tub is for the doctor! And don't forget to stop and see your Uncle Chatford's folks, going or coming."

"Do we pass Syd Chatford's house?" Jack inquired, as Moses whipped along.

"Yes,—about three miles below here. Guess we'll stop as we 're going."

"What 's the reason Syd has never been to your house since that night when the bull chased him?"

"He knows better 'n I do; but I can guess," said Moses, grinning. "I guess he offered himself to Annie that evening, after the rest had gone,—he asked

to see her alone, anyway ; and it's my opinion he got the mitten."

"He lost his interest in singing, all at once," remarked Phin ; "and he don't think half so much of his relatives as he did one spell. He was dreadful sweet on us for one while."

"Is she — going to marry anybody ?" Jack hesitatingly inquired.

"Of course she will ! all such pretty girls do," replied Moses. "But none of the fellows that hang round our house have any chance ; she 'll look higher than any one of them, I can tell 'em !"

"Mose has found out she 'll look higher 'n him !" giggled Phineas.

"Me ? I 'm her cousin," said Moses, turning very red. "I don't believe in cousins marrying."

"Guess the grapes that grow on that vine are a little bit sour," said Phin, giving Jack a significant wink.

"You 'd better hush up !" And Moses, in his vexation, gave Old Maje a cut. "Go 'long !"

This conversation had a deeper interest for Jack than his two companions imagined. "Look higher than any of them, will she ?" he said to himself. "Well she may ! She 's too good for any man !" But he felt an indescribable pang as he thought of Moses's oracular, "Of course she will !"

They were travelling the road Jack had travelled on the night of his flight from the scow ; but he was unable to recognize any objects they passed, until

from the summit of a hill he looked down its gentle slope and saw a school-house at the crossing of two roads. It was from this hill that he looked back and saw the lights and heard the singing, as he fled with the hat stolen from the entry; and well he remembered what a shadow fell then and there upon his guilty heart, when the moon went suddenly under a cloud. Now, the beautiful summer day was shining, barefoot children were going to school along the pleasant road, and the poor little fugitive of that memorable night was riding to town to buy a suit of clothes.

At the first house beyond the school-house Moses reined up the horses. "This is Uncle Chatford's; hold the reins, Jack, while Phin and I run in."

Jack had held the reins but a little while when a young farmer came out of a barn on the opposite side of the road, and crossed over. He was little and straight, and, notwithstanding the rough farm-clothes and old straw hat, so strikingly in contrast with his Sunday broadcloth and shining black beaver, Jack recognized at once his friend, Mr. Syd Chatford. Lion's wagging tail testified that he recognized him too.

"Who 's with you?" asked Syd.

"Mose and Phin," said Jack.

"Where be they?" asked Syd (still a little loose in his grammar).

"Gone in to see the folks," replied Jack.

Syd looked at Lion, and patted his head, but made

no allusion whatever to his battle with the bull, whereby Annie's life was saved. Nor did he once speak of Annie. After talking for a few moments on indifferent subjects, he suddenly took off his hat, and holding it up towards Jack in the wagon, said, "Did you ever see that before?"

"I thought I remembered it," replied Jack.

"Ah!" cried Syd, "it seemed the strangest thing! This is the hat that was stole from me out of the school-house, back here. Five or six days after that, happening to look under the buggy-seat, there was my hat! The buggy had n't been nowheres except that Sunday night. Was it you put it there?"

"Yes," said Jack, glad to confess his fault; "and it was I that took your hat in the first place. I was passing the school-house bareheaded; I'd been flung into the canal and lost mine, and when I saw a dozen on the nails in the entry, I thought somebody could get a hat easier than I could. I wanted to tell you about it that Sunday night, but I was afraid to."

"By jolly!" cried Syd, "you're a brave fellow, Jack, and I won't tell of you."

"I don't care now whether you tell or not," replied Jack; "for I guess my friends believe I would n't do such a thing again. I've told two of 'em all about it,—my two best friends, Mrs. Chatford and Miss Felton,—and Miss Felton was going to tell you, if you ever came again."

Syd colored, and just then found a bit of dried mud on the wheel, which he seemed to think it very ne-

cessary for him to pick to pieces. Then Moses and Phineas came out.

"Say, Syd!" cried Phin, "ye don't come to see us lately."

"No — not — very lately," replied Syd; "colt 's been a little lame."

"Oh!" said Phin, "has he? pity 'bout it!" And from that time Syd's lame colt was a standing joke with that facetious youngster.

Bidding Cousin Syd good by, the boys drove on to the city.

They stopped the wagon on one of the principal business corners; there several traders came and stood upon the wheels, and tasted the butter, and looked at the cheeses and chickens. Purchasers at good prices were not wanting, the superior quality of the products of Mrs. Chatford's dairy being well known at the corner. Everything was speedily disposed of, except one choice tub of butter and a pair of chickens, which Moses said were going to the doctor.

"Who is the doctor?" inquired Jack.

"Oh! a first-rate old fellow," replied Phin, who seldom praised anybody. "Ma's cousin; brought up together; comes out to see us sometimes; and we always take him something when we come to town."

"He lives over beyond the jail," said Moses. "He'll make us stay to dinner; so suppose we buy the clothes first."

This proposal just suited Jack; and being taken to

Mr. Langdon's store, he was presently furnished with a complete outfit, — coat, vest, trousers, cap, and boots. The clothes were a handsome brown stuff, which Mr. Langdon averred was good enough for a prince. Jack thought so too, and blushed at himself in the glass.

"Besides," said that gentleman, who was an old and tried friend of Mrs. Chatford's, "there is this peculiarity about that cloth, — it never 'll wear out!" Jack was glad of that.

The other boys had some new clothes too, but this was not by any means so important a thing to them as it was to Jack; they had had new clothes before.

Jack kept his on, and had his old suit done up for him in a bundle; then, the bill settled with the "butter and cheese money," the boys all got into the wagon again and started for the doctor's.

Suddenly, just after they had passed the jail, Jack's eyes became fixed upon a person coming down the street, — a stoutish gentleman, plainly dressed, and carrying a good stout cane. Where had he ever seen that familiar form, and that mild, benignant face?

"Hullo!" exclaimed Moses and Phineas together, "there comes the doctor!"

"Why, bless me, boys!" said the doctor, stepping from the sidewalk, and advancing towards them with a beaming smile. "How are all the folks?" shaking their hands cordially. "And who is this, — one of the neighbors' boys?"

"No, he's a boy that lives with us," replied Moses.

With no more introduction than this the gentleman shook hands with Jack ; and all the while Jack's heart was in his throat so that he could not speak a word. The gentleman did not, of course, recognize the little canal-driver in such company and in such clothes. But Jack knew him : it was his friend, the packet passenger.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW JACK WENT TO JAIL, AND WHAT HE SAW.

CASTING a curious look at Jack, the doctor told the boys to drive to his house, put their horses in his barn, and amuse themselves till dinner-time.

"You 'll excuse me ; I 've got to go to jail. To see a patient," he added.

"O Doctor !" cried Phin, "can't you take me into the jail ? I 've never been in ! Moses has."

"Yes, come along, if Moses will take care of the team." Moses said he would. "And your friend here, he can come too. Have you ever been to jail ?" the doctor said, pleasantly, turning to Jack.

"He came pretty near it once," whispered Phin, running to the doctor's side, while Jack, not yet recovered from his surprise and embarrassment at meeting his old friend, got down more slowly from the wagon. "He was took up for stealing our horse and buggy ; though he did n't. He 's only a driver off from the canal," Phin added, enviously, seeing how well Jack appeared in his new clothes.

Thereupon the doctor turned and gave another glance at Jack, who, he imagined, must have overheard the invidious remark, his face wore such a peculiar expression. So he said, laying his large, kind hand on the lad's shoulder, just as he did once

before when that shoulder was ragged and wet: "I should n't suppose this boy had ever been on the canal! He don't look like a driver. It's a terrible place for boys! Have you heard about the one that was murdered not long ago, just a little way out of the city?"

"No!" said Phin. "Was there one?"

"Yes, a boy I felt a particular interest in. His murderer is in the jail here now. He is the patient I am going to visit."

"And shall we see him?" cried Phin, eagerly. "I never saw a murderer in my life! Is he going to be hung?"

"I don't know. There's some doubt about the identity of the body supposed to be that of his victim. It had floated down to the city, and was taken out a few days after the murder, so much disfigured that I could n't recognize it; though one of the boatmen swore to it very confidently. Then it is n't quite clear that the man meant to kill him. It seems that he struck the boy in a passion,—a fatal blow, probably,—and then threw him into the canal. He himself says now that he thinks he killed him, but that he had no intention of doing so."

All this reminded Jack so forcibly of what might have been his own fate, that he held his breath, wondering how it chanced that he was there, listening to the story of that murdered boy, instead of being that murdered boy himself.

"The man has been very sick, and he is now peni-

tent," the doctor went on. "I am his physician, and I am doing what I can for him; but, having myself seen him maltreat the lad, I shall have to appear at his trial and bear witness against him."

"What do you *think* they will do with him?" asked Phin.

"I think he will be sent to the State prison for a term of years, perhaps for life," said the doctor; which Phin thought was something, though not what he had hoped,—it would have been so fine to be able to brag that he had seen a murderer who was afterwards hung! "But here we are at the jail."

"Feel afraid?" Phin whispered to Jack, as the warden took a bunch of formidable keys from the office, and, opening therewith one ponderous iron-bound door after another, showed the visitors into a high, whitewashed, barren hall, bounded on two sides by rows of cells. The cells were furnished with strong, iron-grated doors, some of which were open; and five or six men, probably the nightly occupants of those narrow rooms, were walking leisurely about, or lounging upon benches in the hall.

"Are these the prisoners?" whispered Phin, shrinking by the doctor's side.

"Yes, but they won't hurt you," answered the doctor, with a smile. "That slender, middle-aged man is a counterfeiter. He understands four or five different languages, is a good mathematician, and one of the finest mechanics in the country. But he put his wits to a bad use, and here he is. The short,

stocky man is in for horse-stealing. That boy, — what are you in for, my boy ? ”

“ Taking watches,” said the boy, in a very frank, business-like way. “ But they can’t prove it.”

“ None of these men have had their trial yet,” said the doctor. “ There is my patient, on the bed in the corner. He was in the hospital-room, but, being the only patient, he was so horribly lonesome he begged to be brought back here.”

He approached the bed, on which the prisoner, a rough, hard-featured man, was lying in his clothes. Seeing the doctor, he turned on his pillow and reached out to him a curiously half-bleached, freckled, weather-beaten hand.

“ How ’s the pulse to-day, doctor ? ” he said, in a hoarse, half-whisper. “ I believe I should have got along better if you had tapped me in the arm and let out some of the bad blood.”

The doctor smilingly shook his head. “ Possibly, my friend. But you ’re getting along very well.”

“ I believe I am. Nothing ails me now but bad dreams.”

The doctor, seating himself by the bed, with his watch in one hand and the man’s speckled wrist in the other, asked what his dreams were about.

“ ’T would be hard to say what I don’t dream about ! Everything I ever done comes up again. Then there’s that face, — his face. It gives me no peace. I no sooner shut my eyes than there it is again. By George ! ” said the man, chokingly, “ I was fond of the boy. I never knowed how fond till I — ”

The man cleared his throat, and made a pretence of relieving his hoarseness by getting his head a little higher on the pillow, then went on :—



“I don’t deny the bad treatment; but that was when I was mad. He could swim like an eel, and I relied on that; for I’d no notion he was hurt so when I threw him in.”

The doctor had heard all this many times before; yet he did not discourage the man’s talking, knowing

that his conscience found relief that way, and wishing, perhaps, to let the boys derive a moral lesson from the scene. The prisoner raised his head still higher, doubling the pillow under it, and continued:—

“Does anybody imagine I would deliberately murder that boy? I’d willin’ly swing for ’t, if launchin’ me from a platform would bring him back to life. I’m an old hulk, anyway; fast goin’ to pieces. Bad habits, bad company, rum, and a bad temper,—you see, boys,” turning to the doctor’s young companions, “what they do to a—”

His eye suddenly became fixed, his voice stuck in his throat, and he sprang up, staring wildly, and starting from the bed.

“Jack! Jack or his ghost!” he shrieked out, “sure as I’m a sinner!” Which was making it pretty sure indeed; the prisoner being no other than our old friend, Captain Berrick.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CAPTAIN JACK'S CONFESSIONS.

THE doctor turned, in great surprise and astonishment; and there behind his elbow stood Jack, white and agitated as if he had himself seen a spectre. It was some moments before the good man could bring himself to believe that, in the fine-looking, well-dressed lad who had come to town with his country cousins, he beheld again the wretched little driver whom he had once befriended, and whose supposed unhappy fate he had deplored.

Meanwhile Berrick kept crying out hoarsely, with laughter and tears, "Jack, you rogue! Jack, you rascal! What a trick you've played me! The scow laid up, and me here in the jug! Goin' to let me swing for murderin' on ye, hey? you scamp, Jack! Come here! Your true face is the blessedest sight ever my old eyes looked on! Where have ye been all this while? you mis'ble little villain you!"

Jack, fast recovering his self-possession, in a few words told his story; to which both the doctor and the prisoner listened with extraordinary interest.

"I had n't the least idea I was murdered!" he said, while Berrick grasped and wrung his hand again and again. "I saw you twice after I left you. Do you remember, the next Monday, crossing a field of wheat

a boy was weeding? I was that boy, and I was frightened half to death, for fear you would know me!"

"You! the stupid fellow that had no tongue? You don't say, Jack! Why did n't ye speak? Ah, if you had, 't would have saved a deal of trouble. The scow was laid up for ye, all that Saturday night and Sunday. 'T was me that loosed the dog, hopin' he might find ye; but he cleared out, and that made me half think you had swum ashore. What's the matter with *that* boy?" Berrick demanded, in some irritation, noticing very strange conduct on the part of Phineas.

"He says he knows you," remarked the doctor.

"Like as not he may have seen me on the canal," growled Berrick.

"I 've seen you somewhere else," Phin declared. "I could n't think at first, but now I remember. You 're Mr. Johnson; you 're Aunt Patsy's second husband!"

"You don't know what you 're talkin' about!" Berrick exchanged looks with the doctor. "Well, never mind, now it 's out. I 'd told the doctor before; and now I may as well tell you, Jack. Fact is, I 've got an old-fashioned wife out in that quarter."

Jack, quite bewildered by this discovery, stammered out, "And you had been to her house —"

"Yes, that time when you saw me in the wheat-field. While Pete and Dick were hunting for you down the canal, I took a cruise ashore, and called on the old woman. Don't let on to Molly. She don't know nothin' about that affair."

"I don't see how it ever happened!" said Jack.

"'T was that winter, five year' ago, when I was off lookin' up my half-brother; you've heard me tell of him. He got into a bad scrape when he was a young man, and went off into the woods and changed his name."

"O, I know!" exclaimed Jack. "I thought he looked like you! Old Danvers!"

"A charcoal-burner; a perfect vagabond; that scrape ruined him," said Berrick. "Of course, neither of us felt like braggin' of the relationship, when I found him; and as he had swapped off his name, I thought I would follow his example. So it happened that I married Aunt Patsy under the name of Johnson. A foolish speckelation. I never made a cent by it. She's too tight with her property. You see, I've been a perty hard case, Jack."

"I should think so!" said Jack, made sick at heart by this fresh revelation of the old man's depravity.

"But now I'm goin' to reform. Better late than never, the doctor here tells me. Come, Jack, forgive and forget; we'll go back to the scow, and be better friends than ever."

"I've done with the scow," replied Jack, firmly. "I've got a good place, and I don't mean to leave it."

"That's right!" exclaimed the doctor. "You've done well; stick to it! Don't take a step backward."

"There's no danger as long as I remember your good advice to me," said Jack. "That's what saved me,—that and your kindness!" Tears filled the

boy's eyes as he spoke. "Just the few words you said to me, and the way you said 'em,—you don't know what an effect they had on me! They have been with me, like good angels, I sometimes think, ever since. I never could have begun life new, as I did, if it had n't been for you. And, O, you don't know how often I have thought of you, and wished you could know —" But here Jack, who had said all this in a very earnest but broken manner, quite lost his voice, and fairly sobbed under the kindly caressing arm laid upon his neck.

"Ah, but you have had good friends besides me," said the doctor, his voice and features all a-tremble with emotion, "or you never could have kept on after you'd begun. And there was something strong and good in you, too, Jack."

"That 's a fact!" said Captain Berrick, wiping his eyes. "He was always too good for the canal. For my part, I'm glad as anybody that he has done better for himself; and I cheerfully give up my claim to him here and now. Put that in writin', doctor, and I'll sign it."

As the doctor turned to a desk, where one of the prisoners had been furnished with writing-materials, the captain of the scow asked Jack if he had seen his half-brother, the charcoal-burner, lately. As Jack hesitated about answering, Phin, who was not troubled with much delicacy of feeling, exclaimed: "Old Danvers? Old Danvers is dead!" and proceeded to relate, without disguise, the manner of his death.

"So that 's the end of Jake!" mused Berrick. "He never got over that boyish scrape. I guess you 've heard me tell on 't, Jack. He went with some other young fellers to serenade an old man who had married a young wife,— a tin-horn and cow-bell serenade, you understand. They took along a gun to make a noise with, and to shoot the old man's dog if he come out at 'em. The dog come out, and some one shot at him, and the bullet went into the house and killed the old man in his bed. They was all perty respectable young fellers, belonged to good families; and the killin' was accidental, and it never was gener'ly known who fired the gun. But 't was Jake fired it; he told me; I was a little chap, younger than him. The law did n't touch him; but he never could git over that act, and the family never got over it. He had helped a little about charcoal-burnin' before; but now he went into it, and become a reg'lar hermit o' the woods ever arterwards. He changed his name, as I said, and would 'a' hid himself from himself, if he could. And I went on to the canal. Drowned! So that 's the end of a boyish scrape, is it? Wal! wal!" And Berrick seemed inclined to moralize upon the subject.

"And only think," said Phin, "how the fellers were going to play a trick on old Danvers himself that night in Aunt Patsy's house, if he had only been there! Don't things come round queer, sometimes?"

"Did n't you ask for me that last time you saw Aunt Patsy?" Jack inquired of the captain.

"Why should I?" replied Berrick. "I'd no notion you had been that way; and I did n't care to have her know of my connections. I missed the coal-pit on my way through the woods, or I might have spoke to Jake about you."

"I told him, the first time I saw him, how I had run away from a scow, but I did n't tell him whose scow," said Jack.

Here the doctor brought a paper to Berrick for his signature. This obtained, he and the warden wrote their names under it, as witnesses, and the paper was handed to Jack. He read it; and his last lingering apprehensions that he might yet be taken back to his old life on the canal vanished in a flash of joy.

"Now I am free!" he exclaimed. "Now I've a chance for myself, and no fear of anybody!"

"I want to be free too," remarked Berrick, a little hurt at seeing Jack so glad to part from him. "Pete and Molly's with the scow. Dick has left; it was him that complained of me arter we come back from Buffalo, and heard a drowned boy had been found in the canal. He swore 'fore the coroner he believed 't was you; so they had me arrested. But now you are on your legs, and hearty, there's no reason for keepin' me an hour longer. Please notify my lawyer, Mr. Warden. And let somebody go for Pete; he'll take me aboard the scow; I shall be better off there. Good by, doctor! Good by, Jack!"

Shall I own that a feeling of remorse and something very like affection agitated the boy's breast as

he took leave of the captain? "I wish you could leave the canal too!" he exclaimed, with earnest, misty eyes.

"'T ain't in me,—I 'm such an c'd reprobate, as Pete says. But I mean to do better now. At any rate, I 'm glad you 've got a futur' before ye, Jack! Good by agin! good by!"

And so they parted.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SQUIRE PETERNOT'S TROUBLE.

AGAIN that morning Squire Peternot and his horn-headed cane made their appearance at the door of the Chatford kitchen. The grim old man was even more agitated than when he came to speak of the sheep-killing affair; he bore in his trembling hand a crumpled letter, which he glanced at while he coughed, adjusting his throat in his stiff stock, and inquired for Jack.

"Jack and the boys have gone to the city," said Miss Wansey.

"And his — the dog?" said the squire.

The dog had gone too. Peternot turned to depart, but presently come back.

"He told — that morning," he faltered, "a strange story of how he come by that dog; do you recall — can you repeat it?"

Miss Wansey thought she could, and did repeat it quite circumstantially, omitting only one or two particulars which the squire thought important.

"Mis' Chatford!" called Miss Wansey, at the foot of the chamber stairs, "do you remember the name of the place where Jack found Lion?"

Mrs. Chatford replied that she did not; adding, as she came down into the kitchen, that she did not

think Jack had ever told it. "There 's no new trouble, I hope, Squire Peternot?"

"There is trouble!" briefly answered the squire, as he turned again and limped away.

He went home, harnessed a horse, and started to drive towards the city. But, seeming to consider the many chances of his missing the boys if he went to seek them, he soon turned back; and many a time that afternoon he might have been seen walking or standing in the road before his house, and gazing anxiously towards the town.

Jack went himself to find the scow and announce to the admiring Molly and the astonished Pete how he had come to life, and that Berrick was consequently free. He told them briefly of his fortunes, then bidding them good by, not without a tear for old acquaintance' sake, hurried back to the doctor's to find the dinner waiting.

The doctor himself had just arrived; and if delay had damaged the dinner it had improved the appetites of the guests; while Jack's mind was in such a state of exaltation, that everything at the table of his friend was to him nectar and ambrosia. Many a time he had to stop and ask himself, was all this really so? He could not wonder enough at it all, nor could he be thankful enough. O you fortunate sons of the rich! is it possible for you to know the happiness of a lad like Jack, escaping from a low life and bad companions, and feeling that he has made one safe, sure step toward a better and brighter future? True,

he was but a poor boy still, with no worldly fortune before him save what could be wrought out by his own good hands ; but what of that ? He was young, he was free, he was full of hope ; and, if you but knew it, there is a charm in winning one by one the prizes of life, — a sweetness, with the tonic of a little wholesome bitter in it, — unknown to those who but inherit the victories others have gained. Have you who read this had all the paths of life made smooth before you ? then you must stop often and consider well your blessings, in order not to slight or scorn them, and then go on winning new victories for yourself in higher fields, and doing good to others, or own at last that fortune is really less kind to such as you than to poor, brave boys like Jack.

Good things fell constantly to Jack's share through all his after life, and some great joys were his ; but I doubt if he knew many happier hours than that when he sat at the board of his long-unknown good friend and listened to his cheerful talk, and basked in his beneficent smile.

About the middle of the afternoon the boys started for home. It was dark when they approached Squire Peternot's house ; but there was the lame, old man waiting and watching for them.

"Stop, boys !" he commanded, as they were driving past ; and he fairly frightened them with his husky voice and uplifted cane. "You told once, — tell me again," he said to Jack, "just how you came by this dog."

Jack, in no little surprise, repeated the story, — how he found Lion, singed and half starved and cross, at a basin where the scow had stopped on her first trip up the canal that season.

“Did you learn the name of his last master?” the squire demanded.

“No, but people said he was a gambler; he won money of some men at the tavern, then treated everybody, and drank a great deal himself, and towards morning went to bed. Then the fire broke out in his room, probably from his candle. The dog was burnt trying to get him out. But the man —”

“Where — what basin was this?” interrupted the squire.

Jack replied, “Wiley’s Basin.”

“Boy!” said Squire Peternot, sternly, as if Jack were somehow to blame in the business, “that dog’s master was my own son!”

He walked back to the house; and the boys, struck dumb with amazement, after waiting a little while, drove on.

They had gone but a short distance, when they met Bill Burbank on his horse. He drew rein, and asked if they had seen the squire. Moses related what had just occurred.

“Yes, I was sure of it,” said Burbank. “He had n’t heard from Paul for so long, he stopped me yesterday to ask about him. That was humbling himself a good deal, I thought, for he always blamed me and Don for the bad ways Paul got into before he left

home ; as if *we* ever led *him* into anything ! He used to write to me every week or two, till all of a sudden, last spring, his letters stopped coming. The squire seemed so disturbed when I told him, that I thought this morning I would take over Paul's last letter for him to read. In that he speaks again of his big Newfoundland dog, which he used to mention in nearly every letter he wrote. It struck the squire at once that this might be the dog. Now there's no doubt of it. Paul's last letter was written at Wiley's Basin."

"But Mrs. Chatford said once that the squire had no children," interposed Jack.

"She must have meant none at home. He has himself tried to feel that he had no son, but hard as the old man is, he never could forget Paul !"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHICH IS THE LAST.

BILL galloped away, and the boys drove home. Deacon Chatford came to meet them at the gate, and of course the first news he heard was the strange story of Paul Peternot.

"Poor old man! I pity him!" said the deacon. "But all this only shows, boys, how little circumstances of birth and education sometimes have to do with a young man's turning out well or ill. There was Paul, brought up by respectable parents, — I believe they once designed him for the ministry, — an only son, who need never have wanted for anything if he had behaved himself at home, but he went wrong in spite of everything; while many another boy, with no such advantages, has struggled against hardships and bad influences, and come out nobly triumphant. For, after all, a man's destiny lies in his own character, — and in Providence, which helps those who help themselves," added the deacon, as the wagon stopped at the barn.

Mr. Pipkin unharnessed the team, while the boys hurried into the house, which their eager voices seemed to take by storm. All the way home Jack's heart had swelled and burned with the desire to tell his dearest friend, Annie Felton, of what had befallen

him that day ; and now here she was, smiling to welcome him, for it was Saturday night. There too was motherly Mrs. Chatford, and enthusiastic little Kate, and Miss Wansey, singularly gracious towards him and everybody that evening ; and all admired Jack in his new clothes, and listened with eager interest to the wonderful story the boys had to tell.

The candles had been lighted, and the supper was waiting, but it was long before the family sat down to it, so great was the excitement produced by the story of that day's adventures. Everything, from the meeting with Syd Chatford in the morning to the encounter with Squire Peternot at night, and more particularly Jack's recognition of the doctor, and the scene in the jail, — all had to be told over and over again, while Mrs. Chatford repeatedly lifted the teapot from the hearth to the table, and back again to the hearth.

"Why, Jack," said Annie, with her brightest smile, as the family sat down to supper at last, "your life turns out to be a little romance ! All that seems wanting to complete it, quite in the style of the story-books, is for Squire Peternot to adopt you and Lion in place of his son."

"He can't have Lion !" quickly spoke up Phineas, who already felt some concern of mind lest the squire should lay claim to Paul's dog.

"And I guess we can't spare Jack," said Mrs. Chatford.

"We gave the squire a chance at him," remarked

the deacon, "which he declined to take advantage of; now we 've made up our minds to keep him, if he 'll stay and be to us as our own son."

"Him and Lion!" said Phin; which ludicrous amendment made everybody laugh, even Jack, who saw sudden rainbows in the tears that rushed to his eyes.

"The boys have brought us so much news," then said Mrs. Chatford, "that we ought to tell them some in return, — with the permission of Miss Wansey and Mr. Pipkin."

Mr. Pipkin, looking pleased and foolish, and Miss Wansey, prim and modest, assented, with an "O certainly!" on the part of the lady, and a pucker and a nod on the gentleman's part; whereupon Mrs. Chatford continued: "Two highly esteemed and very useful members of our family have lately had *something to say* to each other; and the result is, we are all invited to a wedding in this house three weeks from to-morrow evening, when Miss Wansey expects to become Mrs. Pipkin."

The announcement was received with immense delight and satisfaction by the little audience, especially by Jack, who remembered that it was their mutual sympathy for him and Lion, at a time when he was in deep trouble, which had brought this worthy pair first to look kindly upon each other.

"O, won't we have a high time at the wedding!" said Phin.

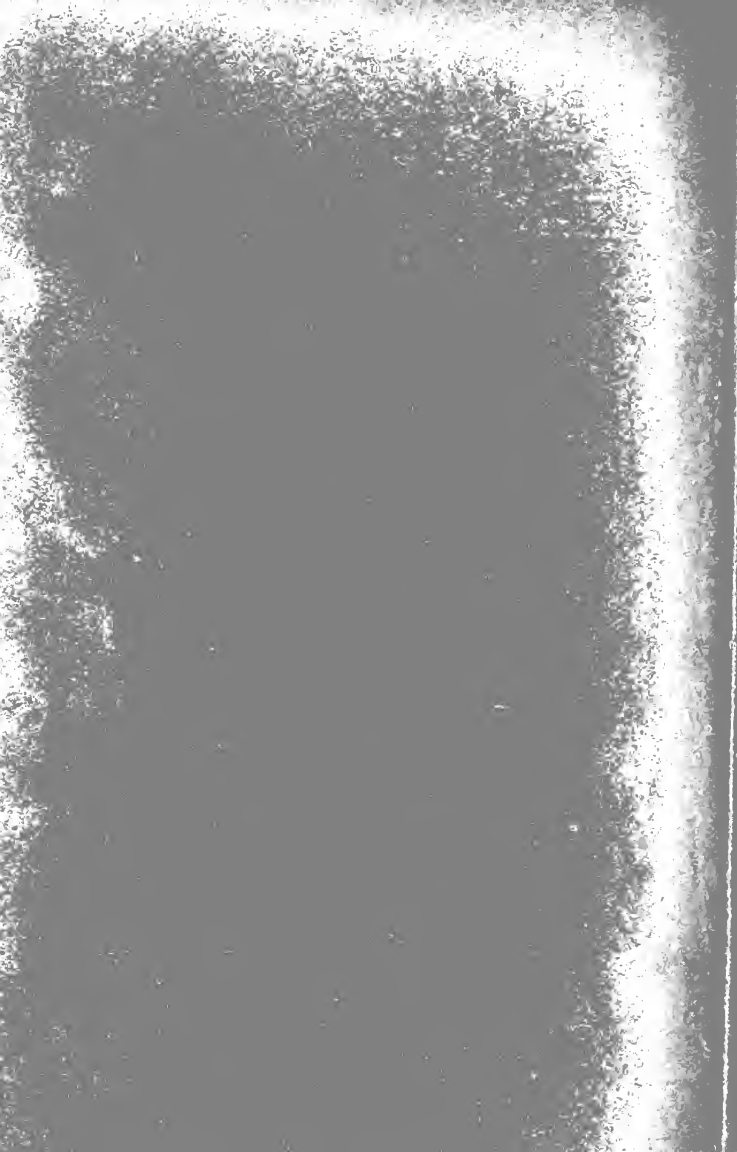
At which joyous festival it is to be regretted that

we, too, dear reader, cannot be present. But the plan of these pages has been fulfilled, — we have seen the poor little canal-boy acquire a new home and freedom, and golden opportunities for the future, — and though we may return to him before long, and see what use he will make of that freedom and those opportunities, it is necessary that we should now for a time take leave of

JACK HAZARD AND HIS FORTUNES.

THE END.







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